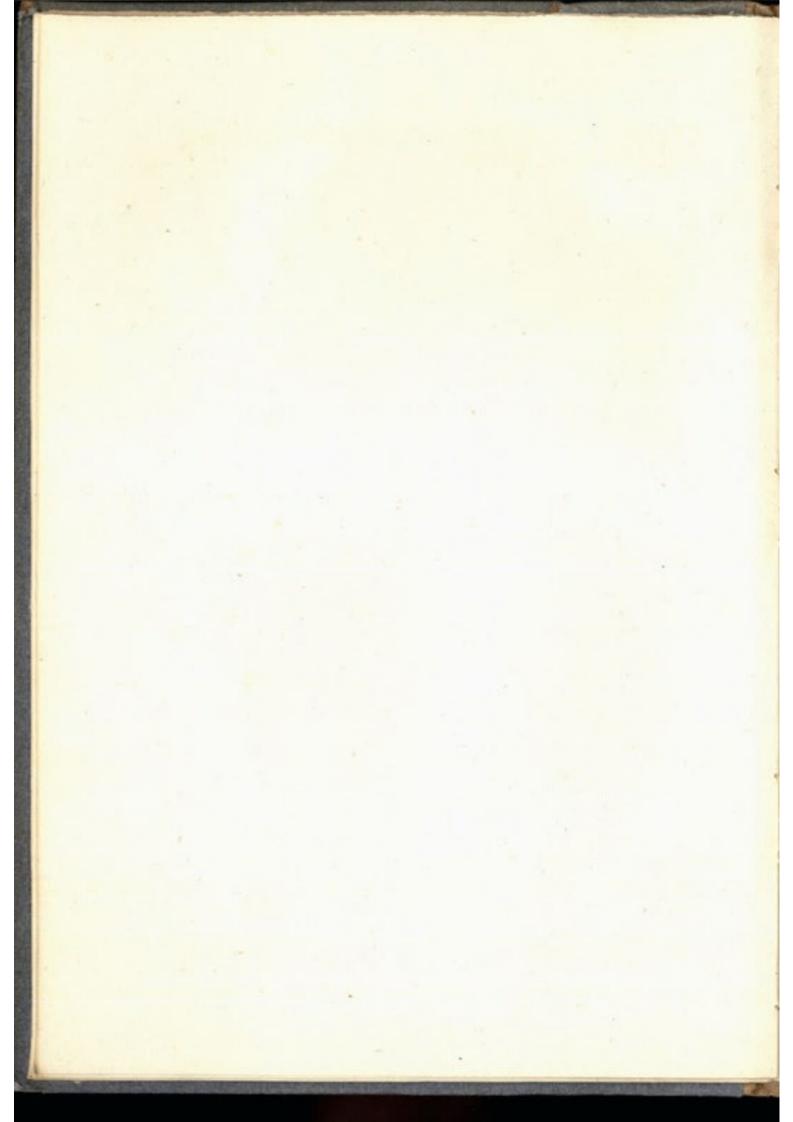
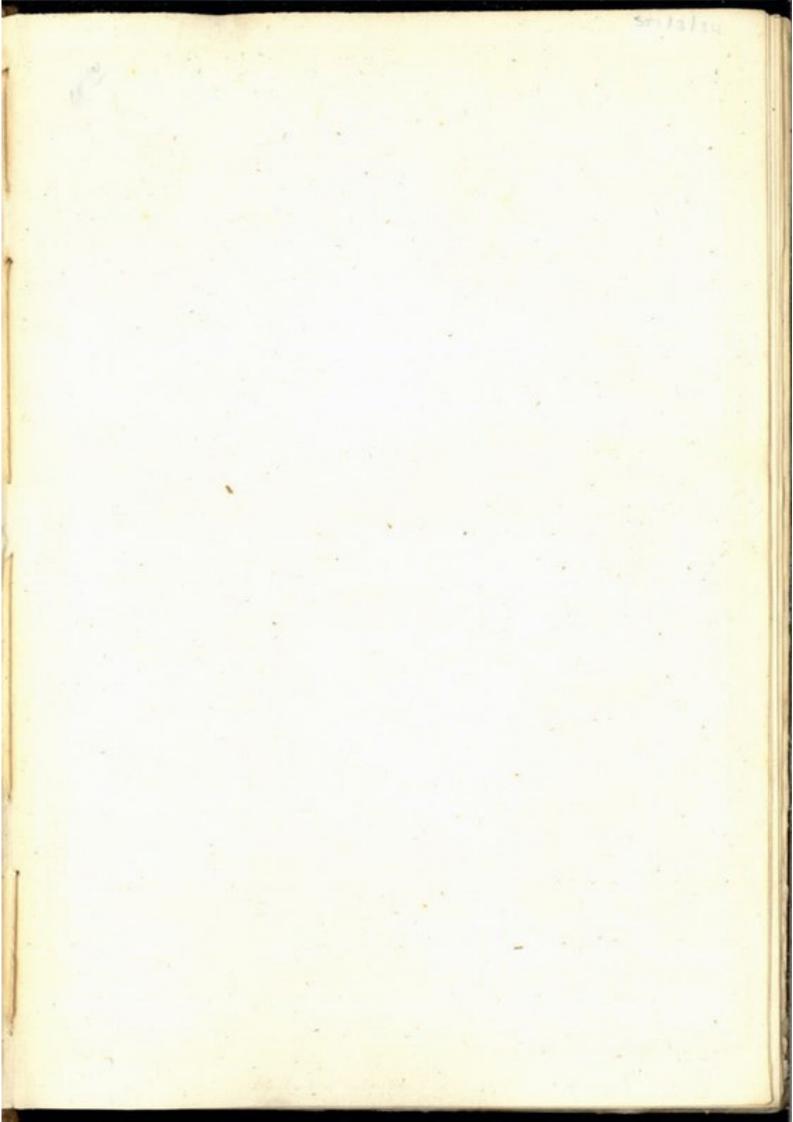
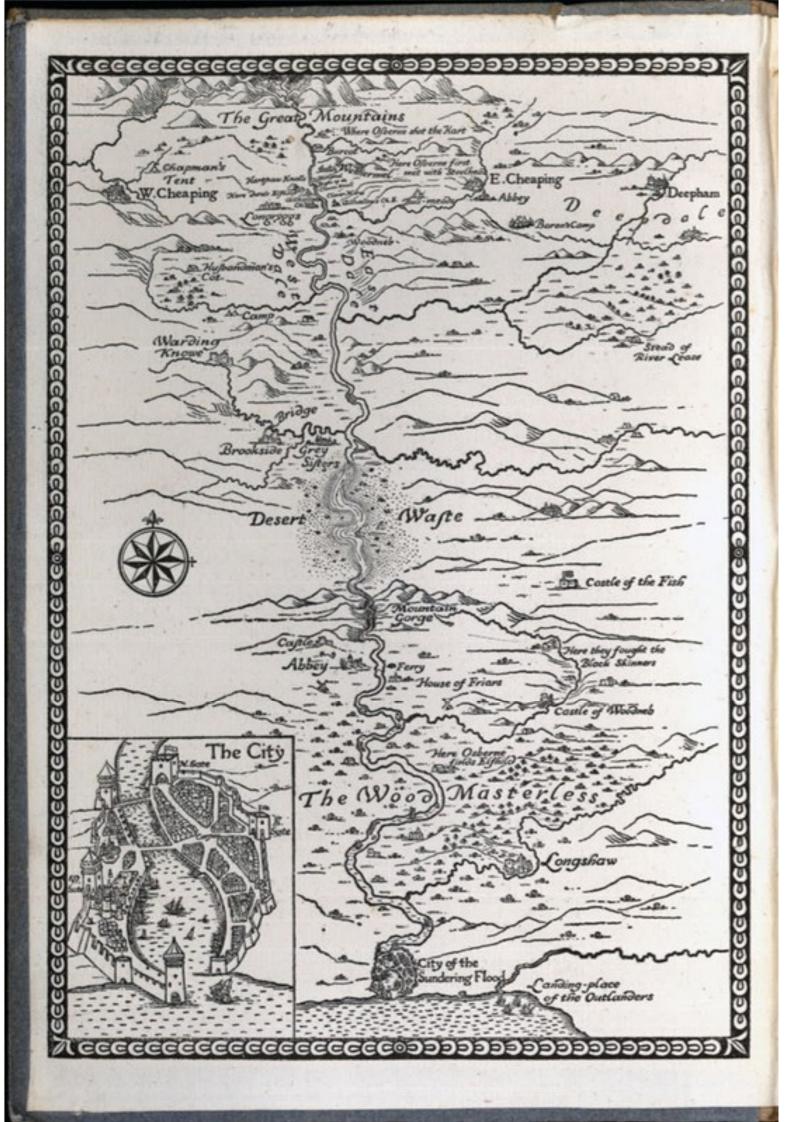
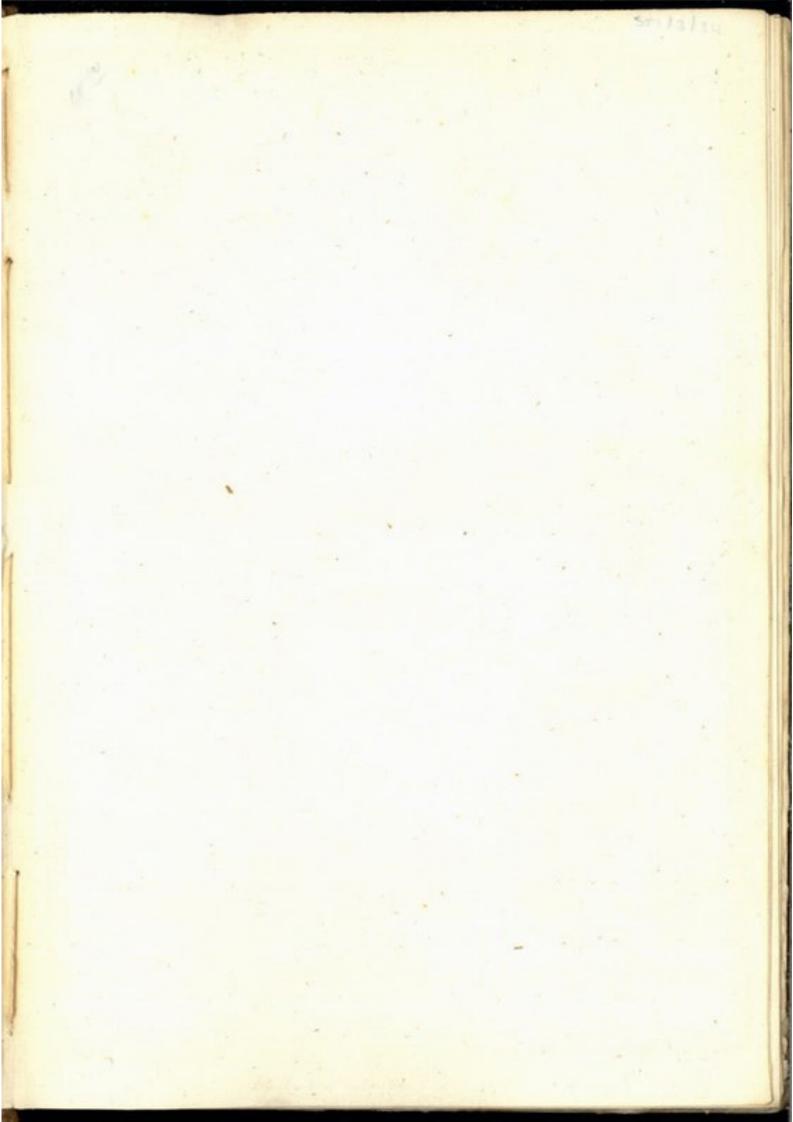
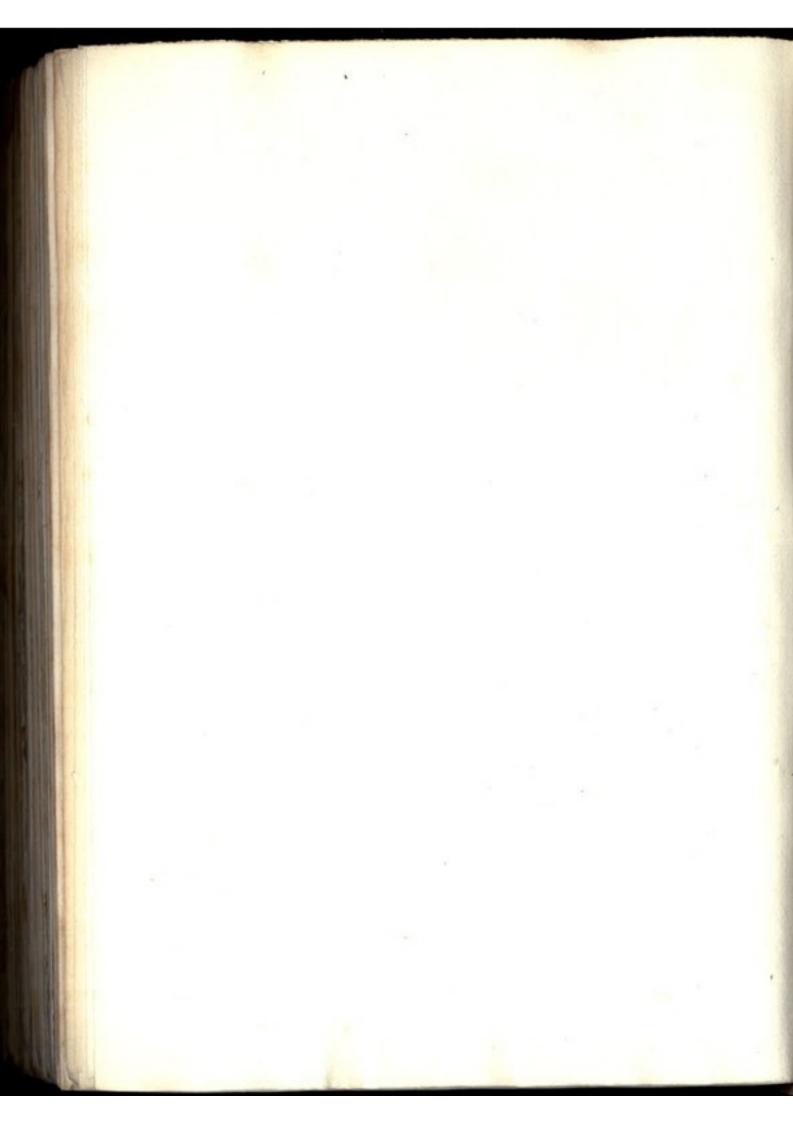
THE SUNDE, IN G FLOC D 3Y THE SUNDERING FLOOD. WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS WILLIAN MORRIS





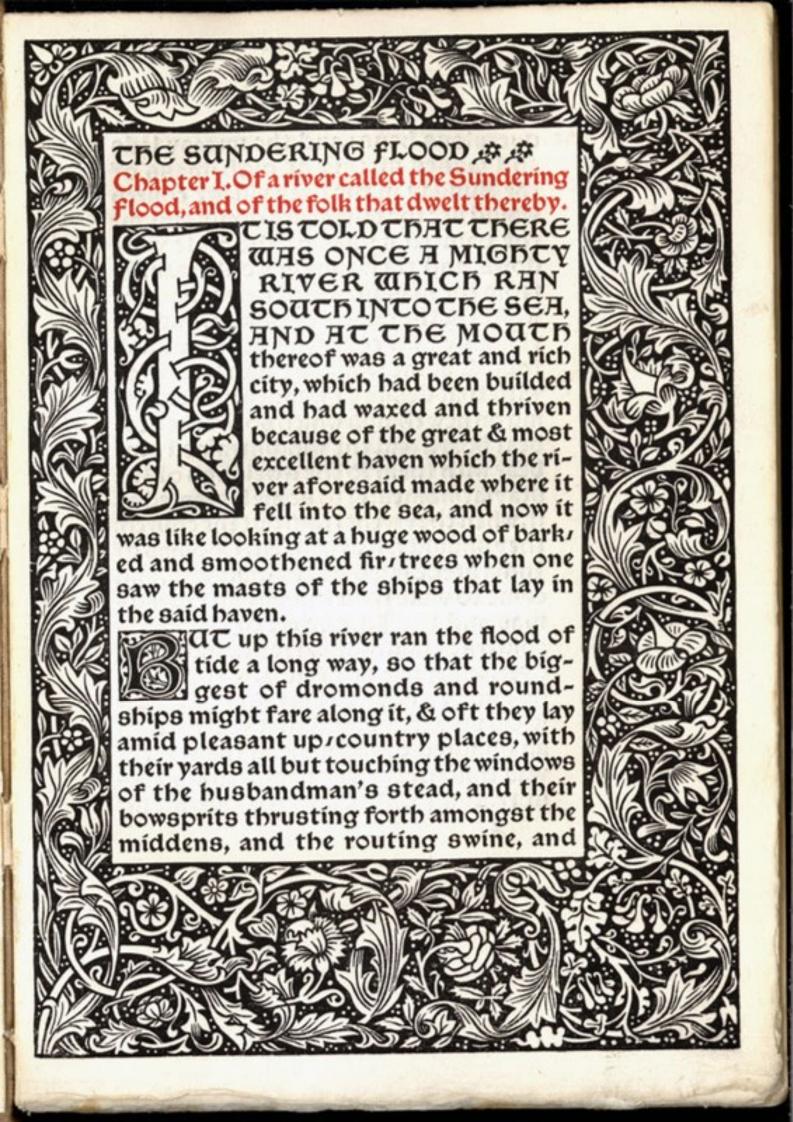






THE SUNDERING FLOOD WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS

THE BUNDERING FLOOD WILLTENBY.



Of the great ships that fare up the river

querulous bens; and the uneasy lads and lasses sitting at high/mass of the Sunday in the grey village church would see the tall masts dimly amidst the painted saints of the aisle windows, and their minds would wander from the mass/backled priest and the words & the gestures of him, and see visions of far countries & outlandish folk, & some would be heart/smitten with that desire of wandering & looking on new things which so oft the seabeat board and the wind strained pine bear with them to the dwellings of the stay/at/homes: & to some it seemed as if, when they went from out the church, they should fall in with St. Thomas of India stepping over the gangway, and come to visit their uplandish Christmas and the Yule feast of the fieldabiders of mid/winter frost. Hnd more/ over, when the tide failed, & there was no longer a flood to bear the seargoing keels up/stream, and that was hard on an hundred of miles from the sea, vet was this great river a noble and widespreading water, and the downlong

stream thereof not so heavy nor so Of the city fierce but that the barges and lesser at the river's keels might well spread their sails mouth when the south west wind blew, & fare on without beating; or if the wind were fouler for them, they that were loth to reach from shore to shore, might be tracked up by the draught of horses and bullocks, and bear the wares of the merchants to many a cheaping.

Ther rivers moreover not a few fell into this main flood, & of them were some no lesser than the Thamesis at Hbingdon, where I, who gathered this tale, dwell in the house of the Black Canons; blessed be St. William, and St. Richard, and the holy Hustin our candle in the dark! Yea & some were even bigger, so that the land was well furnished both of fisheries and water/ways.

the Sundaria of this river was A the Sundering flood, and the city at the mouth thereof was called the City of the Sundering flood. And it is no wonder, considering all that I have told concerning the wares &

The naming of the flood

chaffer that it bore up/country, though the folk of the City and its lands, and Sundering the city folk in special, knew no cause for this name. Nay, oft they jested & gibed and gabbed, for they loved their river much & were proud of it; wherefore they said it was no sunderer but a uniter; that it joined land to land & shoretoshore; that it had peopled the wilderness and made the waste places blossom, & that no highway for wheels and beasts in all the land was so full of blessings & joys as was their own wet highway of the flood. Nevertheless, as meseemeth that no name is given to any town or mountain or river causeless, but that men are moved to name all steads for a remembrance of deeds that have been done and tidings that have befallen, or some one cause. even so might it well be with the Sundering flood, and whereas also I wot something of that cause I shall now presently show you the same.

OR ye must know that all this welfare of the said mighty river was during that while that

it flowed through the plain country anigh the city, or the fertile pastures & acres of hill & dale & down, further to the north. But one who should follow it up further and further would reach at last the place where it came forth from the mountains. There, though it be far smaller than lower down, yet is it still a mighty great water, & it is then well two hundred miles from the main sea. Now from the mountains it cometh in three great forces, and many smaller ones, & perilous and awful is it to behold: for betwixt those forces it filleth all the mountain ghyll, and there is no foothold for man, nay for goat, save at a hundred foot or more above the water, & that evil and perilous; and as is the running of a winter mill stream to the beetles & shrew/mice that haunt the greensward beside it, so is the run, ning of that flood to the sons of Hdam and the beasts that serve them: & none has been so bold as to strive to cast a bridge across it.

The flood comes from the mountains

Of the wastes beyond the gorge

Autwhen ye have journeyed with much toil and no little peril over the mountain necks, for by the gorge of the river, as aforesaid, no man may go, and have come out of the mountains once more, then again ye have the flood before you, cleaving a great waste of rocks mingled with sand, where groweth neither tree nor bush nor grass; and now the flood floweth wide and shallow but swift, so that no words may tell of its swiftness, & on either side the water are great wastes of tumbled stones that the spates have borne down from the higher ground. And ye shall know that from this place upward to its very wells in the higher mountains, the flood decreaseth not much in body or might, though it be wider or narrower as it is shallower or deeper, for nought but mere trickles of water fall into it in the space of this sandy waste, and what feeding it bath is from the bents & hills on either side as you wend toward the mountains to the north, where, as aforesaid, are its chiefest wells.

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gom when ye have journeyed over this waste for some sixty miles the land begins to better, & there is grassagain, yet no trees, and it rises into bents, which go back on each side, east and west, from the flood, and the said bents are grass also up to the tops, where they are crested with sheer rocks black of colour. Hs for the flood itself. it is now gathered into straiter compass, & is deep, and exceeding strong; high banks it bath on either side thereof of twenty foot and upward of black rock going down sheer to the water: & thus it is for a long way, save that the banks be higher & higher as the great valley of the river rises toward the northern mountains.

yet, and is well grassed, and in divers nooks & crannies groweth small wood of birch and whiles of quicken tree; but ever the best of the grass waxeth nigh unto the lips of the Sundering flood, where it rises a little from the Dale to the water; and what little acresland there is, and it is but

The flood goes deep and strong betwixt high banks land Dale

Of the up- little, is up on knolls that lie nearer to the bent, and be turned somewhat southward; or on the east side of the flood, which runneth here nigh due north to south, on the bent/side itself. where, as it windeth and turneth, certain slopes lie turned to south west. And in these places be a few garths, fenced against the deer, wherein grow rye, and some little barley whereof to make malt for beer and ale, whereas the folk of this high/up windy valley may have no comfort of wine. And it is to be said that ever is the land better and the getting more on the east side of the Sundering flood than on the west.

S to the folk of this land, they are but few even now, and heare but few even now, and belike were fewer yet in the time of my tale. There was no great man amongstthem, neither King, nor Earl, nor Alderman, & it had been hard living for a strong, thief in the Dale. Yet folk there were both on the east side & the west of the flood. On neither side were they utterly cut off from the world outside the Dale: for though it were

toilsome it was not perilous to climb The flood the bents and so wend over the necks sunders the east and west, where some forty miles east Dale from the west bank and fifty from the from the east you might come down into a val- west ley fairly well peopled, wherein were two or three cheaping/towns: and to these towns the dalesmen had some resort, that they might sell such of their wool as they needed not to weave for themselves, & other small chaffer, so that they might buy wrought wares such as cutlery and pots, and above all boards and timber, whereof they had nought at home.

This you must wot & understand, that howsoever the Sundering flood might be misnamed down below, up in the Dale & down ar way to the southern mountains it was such that betternamed it might not be, & that nought might cross its waters undrowned save the fowl flying. Nay and if one went up/stream to where it welled forth from the great mountains, he were no nearer to passing from one side to the other, for there would be

The Date of the flood

nought before him but a wall of sheer rock, and above that rent and tumbled Sundering crags, the safe strong/houses of erne and osprey and gerfalcon. Wherefore all the dealings which the folk on the east Dale & the west might have with each other was but shouting & crying across the swirling and gurgling eddies of the black water, which themselves the while seemed to be talking together in some dread and unknown tongue.

RUE it is that on certain feastdays, & above all on Midsummer night, the folk would pluck up a heart, & gather together as gaily clad as might be where the flood was the narrowest, save at one place, whereof more hereafter, and there on each side would trundle the fire wheel, and do other Midsummer games, and make music of string/play and horns, and sing songs of old time & drink to each other, and depart at last to their own

homes blessing each other. But never might any man on the east touch the hand of any on the west, save it were

that by some strange wandering from Wethermel the cheaping towns aforesaid they might meet at last, far and far off from the Dale of the Sundering flood.

Chapter II. Of Wethermel & the child

RAM we nigher now to the heart of our tale, and tell how on the east side of the Sundering flood was erewhile a stead hight Wethermel: asteadmore

lonely than most even in that Dale, the last house but one, and that was but a cot, toward the mountains at the head of the Dale. It was not ill set down, for its houses stood beneath a low spread, ingknoll, the broader side whereof was turned to the south, west, and where by consequence was good increase of corn year by year. The said knoll of Wethermel was amidst of the plain of the Dale a mile from the water, side, and all round about it the pasture was good for kine & horses & sheep all to the water's lip on the west & half way



The stead for ill/luck

up the bent on the east; while towards has a name the crown of the bent was a wood of bushes good for firewood & charcoal, and even beyond the crown of the bent was good sheep, land a long way.

EXEVERTRELESS, though its landwas fruitful as for that coun, try, yet had Wethermel no great name for luck, and folk who had the choice would liever dwell otherwhere. so that it was hard for the goodman to get men to work there for hire. Many folk deemed that this ill/luck came because the knoll had been of old time a dwelling of the Dwarfs or the Landwights, and that they grudged it that the children of Hdam had supplanted them, and that corn grew on the very roof of their ancient house. But however that might be, there was little thriving there for the most part: and at least it was noted by some, that if there were any good hap it ever missed one generation, & went not from father to son, but from grandsire to grandson: & even so it was now at the beginning of this tale.

OR he who had been master of Of those Methermel had died a young that dwell man, & his wife followed him in a month or two, and there was left in the house but the father and mother of these twain, hale & stout folk, heof fifty winters, she of forty five; an old woman of seventy, akinswoman of the housewho had fostered the lategoodman; & a little lad who had to name Osberne, now twelve winters old, a child strong and bold, tall, bright and beauteous. These four were all the folk of Wethermel, save now and then a hired man who was hard pressed for livelihood would be got to abide there some six months or so. It must be told further that there was no house within ten miles either up or down the water on that side, save the little cot abovesaid nigher to the mountains, and that was fourmiles up/stream; it hight Burcot, & was somewhat kenspeckle. Withal as to those Cloven Motes, as they were called, which were between the folk on either side, they were holden at a stead seven miles below Wethermel, so that

in Wether-

Osberne work

in all wise was it a lonely and scantlymust have a manned abode: & because of this every share in the man on the stead must work somewhat hard and long day by day, & even Osberne the little lad must do his share; and up to this time we tell of, his work was chiefly about the houses, or else it was on the knoll, or round about it, scar, ing fowl from the corn; weeding the acreground, or tending the old horses that fed near the garth; or goose, herd, ingat whiles. for sooth, the two elders, who loved and treasured the little carle exceedingly, were loth to trust him far out of sight because of his bold heart & wilful spirit; and there were perils in the Dale, & in special at that rough and wildend thereof, though they came not from weaponed reivers for the more part, though now and again some desperate outcast from the thicker peopled lands had straved into it: & there was talk from time to time of outlaws who lay out over the mountain necks, & might not always do to lack a sheep oraneatorahorse. Other perils more of every day there were for a young child.

as the deep and hurrying stream of the Derils in Sundering flood, & the wolves which that wild haunted the bent & the foothills of the end of the mountains; & ever moreover there was the peril from creatures seldom seen. Dwarfs and Land/wights to wit, who, as all tales told, might be well pleased to have away into their realm so fair a child of the sons of Adam as was this Osberne, forsooth for the most part the lad kept within bounds, for love's sakerather than fear, though he wotted well that beating abode bound, breaking; but ve may well wot that this quiet, ness might not always be. And one while amongst others he was missing for long, & when his grandsire sought him he found him at last half way between grass and water above the fierce swirling stream of the river; for he had clomb down the sheer rock of the bank. which all along the water is fashioned into staves, as it were organ/pipes, but here & there broken by I wot not what mighty power. There then was my lad in an inglemook of the rock, & not able either to go down or come up, till the

Dale

Osberne tells of a new playmate goodman let a rope down to him and hauled him on to the grass.

MELIKE he was a little cowed by the peril, & the beating he got forputting his folk in such fear; but though he was somewhat moved by his grandame's tears and lamentation over him, and no less by the old carline's bewaiting for his days that he would so surely shorten, yet this was not by a many the last time he strayed from the stead away into peril. On a time he was missing again night/long, but in the morning came into the house blithe & merry, but exceeding hungry, & when the goodman asked him where he had been & bade him whipping cheer. he said that he cared little if beaten he were, so merry a time he had had; for he had gone a long way up the Dale, & about twilight, this was in mid, May, had fallen in with a merry lad somewhat bigger than himself, who had shown him many merry plays, and at last had brought him to his house, which is not builded of stone and turf, like to ours, saith he, but is in a hole in the rock; and

there we wore away the night, & there was no one there but we two, and again he showed me more strange plays, which were wondrous; but some did frighten me.

The Dwarf, child does magic

hen his grandsire asked him what like those plays were. Said Osberne: he took a stone and strokedit, & mumbled, & it turned into amouse, and played with us nought afraidawhile; but presently it grew much bigger, till it was bigger than a hare; & great game meseemed that was, till on a sudden it stood on its hind/legs, and lo it was become a little child, and oh, but so much littler than I; and then it ranaway from us into the dark, squeak, ing the while like a mouse behind the panel, only louder. Well, thereafter my playmate took a big knife, and said: Now, drudgling, I shall show thee a goodgameindeed, Hndsohedid, for heset the edge of the said knife against hisneck, & offcame his head; but there cameno blood, nor did he tumble down, but took up his head and stuck it on again, and then stood crowing like our

C

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The Dwarf, child falls to playing the pipe, & to telling tales

big red cock. Then he said: Poultry, Cockerel, now will I do the like by thee. # And he came to me with the knife: but I was a fraid, & gathold of his hand and had the knife from him; and then I wrestled with him & gave him a fall; but I must needs let him get up again presently, whereas he grew stronger undermy band: then be thrust me from him and laughed exceeding much, and said: here is a champion come into my house for sooth Mell. I will leave thine head on thy shoulders, for belike I might not be able to stick it on again, which were a pity of thee, for a champion shalt thou verily be in the days to come. ### Hfterthisallhis play with me was to sit down and bid me bearken; and then he took out a little pipe, & put it to his mouth, & made music out of it, which was both sweet & merry. And then he left that, and fell to telling me tales about the woods where big trees grow. and how his kindred had used to dwell therein, & fashioned most fair things in smith's work of gold and silver and iron; and all this liked me well, and he

said: Itell thee that one day thou shalt The neckhave a sword of my father's father's guard of fashioning, and that will be an old one, the carline for they both were longslived Find as he spake I deemed that he was not like a child any more, but a little old man, white/haired and wrinkle/faced. but without a beard, & his hair shone like glass. And then, then I went to sleep, and when I woke up again it was morning, and I looked around & there was no one with me. So I arose & came home to you, and I am safe and sound if thou beat me not, kinsman.

om ye may judge if his foreelders were not scared by the lad's tale, for they knew that he had fallen in with one of the Dwarfkin, & his grandame caught him up & huggedhim & kissedhim well favouredly; and the carline, whose name was Bridget, followed on the likeroad; and then she said: See you, kinsmen, if it be not my doing that the blessed bairn has come back to us. Tellus, sweetheart, what thou hast round thy neck under thy shirt, Osberne laughed. Said he:

C2

Bridget

Osberne escapes his beating

Thou didst hang on me a morsel of parchment with signs drawn thereon, and it is done in a silk bag. fear not, foster/mother, but that I will wear it yet, since thou makest such to/do over it Hhi the kindlad thouart, my dear, said the carline. I will tell you, kinsmen, that I had that said parchment from our priest. & it is strong neckguard againstallevilthings, for on it is scored the holy Rood, & thereon are the names of the three holy Kings, & other writing withal which I may not read, for it is in clerks' Latin #Hndagain the two women made much of the little lad. while the goodman stood by grumbling &grunting; but this time did Osberne escape his beating, though he was promised a drubbing which should give him much to think on if he went that way again; and the women prayed and besought him to be obedient to the goodman berein.

kinsfolk, to wit, that the Dwarf had given him for a gift that same knife wherewith he had played

the game of heads off, & a fair sheath The thereto, & he had done him to wit that Dwarf's most like luck would go with it. Where, gift fore little Osberne had the said knife hidden under his raiment, along with the parchment whereon was scored the holy Rood & the good words of wisdom written. Chapter III. Molves harry the flock. Ou these matters, and other strayings & misdoings of the youngling, befell before the time whereof Inowtell, when he was, as aforesaid, passed of twelve years; & it was in latter autumn, when the nights are lengthening. At this time there was a hired man dwelling with them, whose work it was to drive the sheep afield, either up on to the eastern bents or away off down to the water, so as they might not eat the grass of the kine from them. But Osberne, both of his own will & at the bidding of the goodman, went oft to field with this man

of the wolves

John tells John and helped him to keep the sheep from straying over far. Now one day at evening, somewhat later than he was wont, when, as it chanced, Osberne had not fared with him, back comes John from the bents, and he looked scared and pale, and he tells the tale that as the light began to fail up there, three huge wolves fell upon the sheep, and slew sundry of them, and it was easy to be seen of him that he had held no very close battle with the wolves, but had stood aloof till they had done their supper, & then gathered what he could of the sheep without going overmear the field of deed. The goodman berated him for his cowardice. & seemed to be grudge him his victuals somewhat that night, whereas, what with them whom the wolves had slain, and them who had perchance fled away, the flock was seventeen wethers short. John excused himself what he might, & said that he had no weapon, nought save his shepherd's staff, & that the wolves had slain his dog in the first stour: but while he spake, Osberne, who sat by, deemed

him somewhat stark and tall to be so The goodlittle/bearted.

man & John sheep

omever, the next day the good, look for the man and John must needs go up to the bent to see if they might find aught alive of the sheep that were missing, & each of them bore a shield and short spear, that they might make head against the wolves if that host should fall on them in the middle of the day. Meantime Osberne, by the goodman's bidding, drives the flock down toward the water, nothing loth, for ever the wondrous stream seemed to draw theladtoit. Anda fair day he had of it, wandering amidst the sheep and being friendly with them, whiles drawing out his knife to look thereon, as oft he did when he was alone; & forsooth it was a goodly weapon, carven with quaintnesses about the heft, the blade inlaid with runes done in gold, & the sheath of silver. Whiles also he stood on the river's lip and looked across the water, which was there in most places as big as the Thames is at Reading, but sometimes narrower. But there was nought

They come back illpleased

stirring within eyeshot on the further bank that day, save the fowl, and a bull that camerunning along and lowing as he went on some errand, whatever it might be, for he was not followed of anymen. So he came back with the flock before dark, all safe; neither had he gone far from the stead, for so he was

bidden of his grandsire.

LITTLE after comes in the goodman with John, neither of them in very sweet temper; they had seen nought of the sheep save the hides & bones of a half/score, but the wolves they had not failed to see: they had come to the same place as the last night, & seemed by no means afraid of the man, host with its spears and shields, wherefore these last had turned their backs and run from them stoutly, and now sat together glower, ing on each other, and casting nowand again a gibe each at each. But they were atone in this, that the wolves were huge andfierce beyond measure, and such as any man might fear. But at last John spake and said: Well, master, it is as

they say down the Dale, that this is no The goodlucky house; meseems yeare beset with man waxes no common wolves, but with skin- wrath changers who have taken the shape of wolves, whether they be Landwights or Dwarfs, or rideramights of the out, laws.

that word waxed the master wood, wrath, as was his wont of any spake of the luck of the thermel; and he forgot his fear in his anger, and said: Bearken the fool talk of him! Thou hadst not the heart for all thine inches to go forward before the master, & a man on the downward side of years: & now thou must needs make up fairy tales to cover thy coward, ice Olsaid John, grinning, keep thy head, master: for sooth it is that thou wert the first to run, and wert the first through the door @ Thou liest, said the goodman; but this I tell thee, that whosoever was afraid then, thou shalt be afraid now F And he rose up and smote his man on the face so that he fell to the ground, and John leapt up and would have smitten his master asings

Osberne gain; but even therewith comes in the goodwife, & Bridget with her, bearing in the supper smoking bot, and something seemed to hold John back from his blow, & he sat down, surly enough but silent. Then said the goodwife: What is to do here? hast thou run against the settle end, John, that thy cheek is red and blue? DLaughed the youngling thereat, & a word came into his mouth, and he sang:

> All grey on the bent There the sheep greedy went: The big spear and shield Met the foes of the field, But nought the white teeth In the warriors gat sheath. for master and man full meetly they ran. But now in this ball The fear off doth fall from one of the twain. And his hand getteth gain. But the other sits there, And new groweth his fear Both of man and of grey. So the meat on board lay,

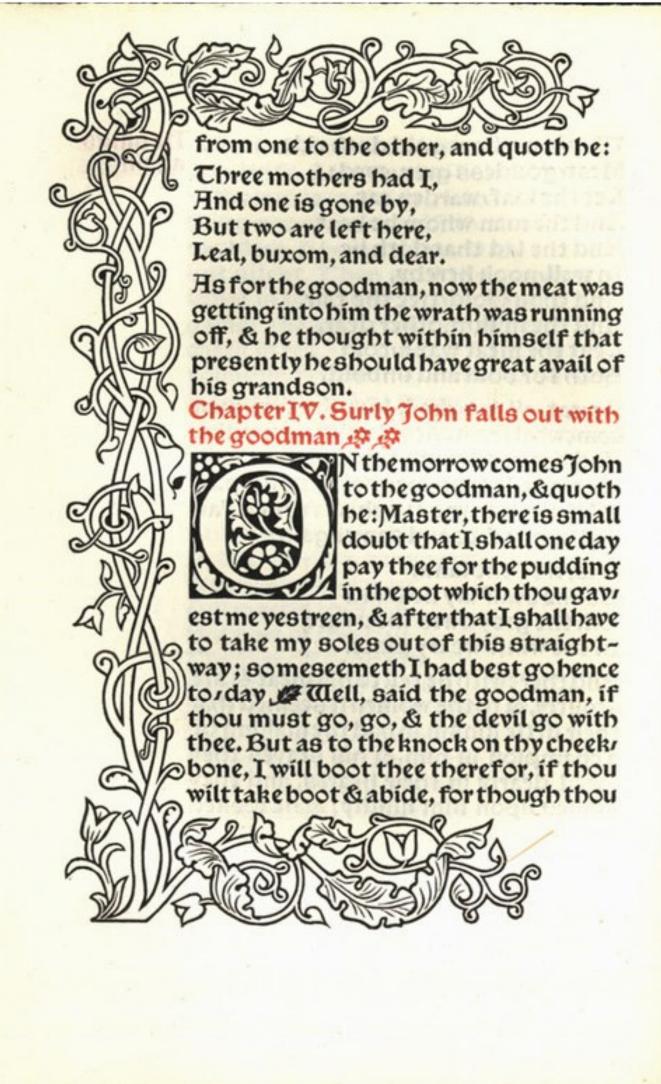
he sings again

Thou on whom gold doth ride,
Meatigoddess greyieyed;
Let the loafiwarden eat,
Hnd the man whom he beat,
Hnd the lad that doth lie
In wallmook hereby,
Hnd thou Golditree the fair,
Hnd the milkimother dear,
Lest the meat wax aicold
Both for bold and unbold.

Foreat all laughed, but the two men somewhat from one side of their mouths. And the goodman said: See thou to it, kinsman, lest stripes be thy song pay. But Osberne laughed from a fair and merry face and sang again:

O lord of the land,
To the staff lay no hand
Till the grey ones thou face
In the wind weary place.

And therewith he fell to his meat & ate stoutly, & to the women it seemed that their little kinsman had the making of a champion in him, & his staves they loved dearly in their hearts, and they smiled upon him kindly; & he looked



benohard worker, norvery deft of thy he is illhands, yet the winter is lonely here, & content in thou wilt be missed somewhat.

Methermet

QUOTH John: Yea, goodman, but there is this in it withal, that Methermel liketh me not. though I say nought against thee for a master. I love not thy were wolves, that are big & gruesome enough to frighten two stout armed men; & Llove not thy Dwarfs, who cut off their own heads & stick them on again, and give guesting to little lads, doing them no burt: formeseems that means that the said Dwarf will be craving guest/quarters here one day, & who knows how soon: &I care not for such an one as a fellow at board. And then there is thy grand, son, & a fair boy he is and a good scald, though that be come upon him some what suddenly. But he is over bigwordy for me, and I see clearly that soon there shall be two masters in this house, and one is well enough for me. And lastly as to thy kinswomen: I wot well I shall have no good word from them year in year out. So take this for Surly John gets his hire my last word, that I shall turn my back upon thee so soon as thou hast paid memy hire, and shall go seek quarters down the Dale, at some merrier stead than this.

be goodman looked on him sour, ly, and then turned about & took a bag from the chest, & drew silver from it, and told over certain pieces & laid them before John, who is hence, forth called Surly John, and said: here is thine hire in good silver. And now I shall not say one more word to thee for good or bad, save this, that thou hadst best look to it that thy silver melt not before many months are over. Take thy soles out of this straightway & So John took up his silver, & stowed it in his pouch, & then he said: Well, good, man, now that I am paid I think that I had best pay thee for the cheek/knock of last night Bhe was a tall man and strong of thirty winters, & the goodman somewhat on in years & not overstrong, wherefore the battle seemed liketogoalloneway. Butlo, as herushed on the goodman, of a sudden he felt his

feet pulled away from under him, and The gibes fell noseling to the ground; and when of the lad he would rise, to there was on one side Osberne of him the goodman with a cudgelin his hand, and Osberne on the other, with his whittle drawn; and the lad laughed and said: Thou hast been a long while and used many words about going, so belike thou wert best tarry no longer: or wert thou thinking thou would st go to bed? Nay, thou hast talked long, but nought so long that it is night yet.

Otherewith Surly John arose & shook the dust of the floor off him, shouldered his bag, which he had ready by, & went out of doors and down the Dale afoot, for he was too shamefaced to crave the loan of a horse, to which forsooth the kinsmen would have made him welcome.

Otheday wore amidst divers mate ters, & the sheep pastured anigh to the Mel; but ever the goodman said that, wolves or no wolves, he must drive them up the bent next day. But he said this so often, that it seemed as if he were not over willing thereto;

The goodman hears one stirring

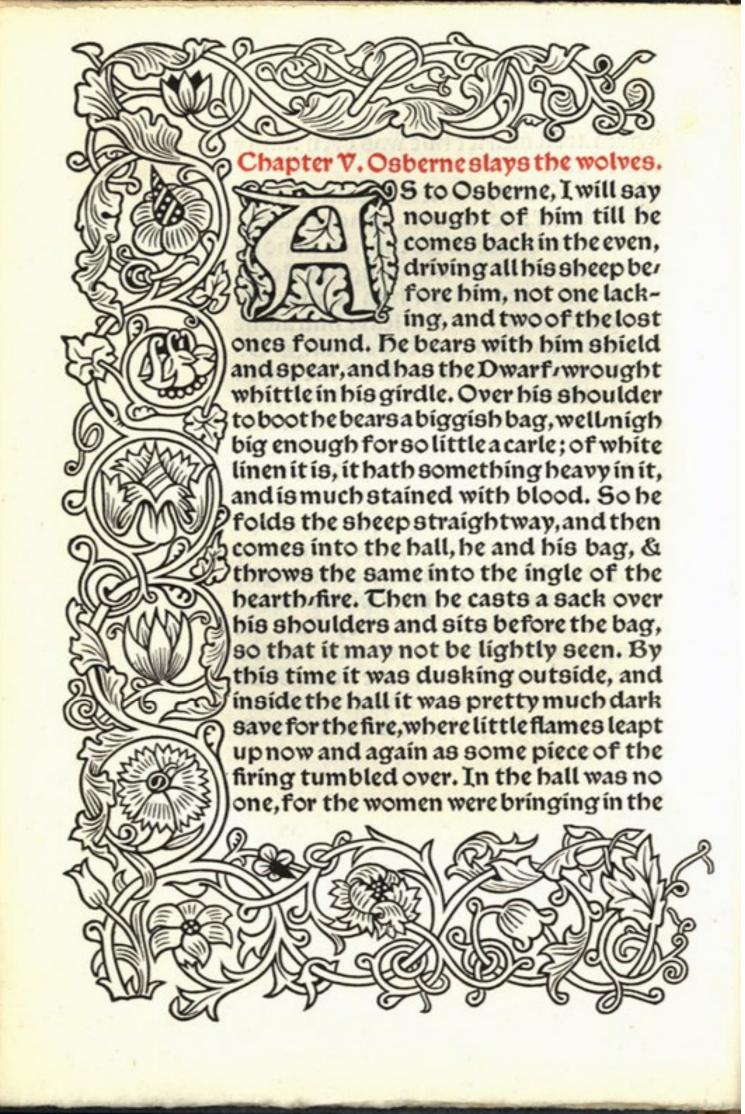
and in the evening be took forth an old sword which he had, a good one, & sat whetting it with a hone. So they fared to bed.

Was UT in the morning ereit was light the goodman deemed he heard goings on in the house, & hesat up and hearkened. Next then he hearda handamongst the three shields which bungon the panel the other side of his shut bed, and thereafter be heard one going to the door; and he smiled there, at and lay down again, and presently there came the sound of the bleating of many sheep. So the carle stands up therewith, & does on his raiment, and takes his spear and shield, and girds his sword to him, and goeth forth and out of the garth, and turns his face up toward the bent, but goes very slow; & day was now just beginning to dawn though the stars yet shone; clear was the morning. Now in the grey light the carle could just see what he looked to see, to wit, the whole flock going together toward the bent, and a little figure of a son of Adam going after them, on whomared scarlet bue was even dimly The carle to be seen.

follows his

The carlesmiled, & said to him- grandson self: forsooth, yonder ruffler must needs clothe him in boliday raiment to do his doughty deed! Now will I not follow him to mar his championship, but will leave him alone tohisluck, which I see to be great \$50 he abode a little in an ingle of the garth wall, while the sheep less ened but grew clearer before him, and the scarlet raiment of his grandson grew brighter; and then he went swiftly, skirting the knoll till be had it betwixt him and the stead, & thereafter he went more leis surely toward the north; & he said to himself: The lad will do well enough; and as to the women, they will make the less outcry, that when they find me & my weapons gone they will think I have fared with him up the bent @ So therewith he betook himself well out of the way, keeping near to the bank of the river.

d



kine, & the goodman was not yet come They see in from the field.

Osberne

Bhere he sits quietly, stirring in the hall little. And the next tidings is, the goodman comes home alone; he hears the sheeparbleating, & goes glad at heart to the fold; and there is his joy eked, for by the light of the moon, which is now rising, he can see well enough to tell over the sheep, & finds two more than there were yesterday. So he goes speedily toward the hall, & the women now come up after him, having gotten the kine into the byre; so they all three go into the hall together.

The Neries out the good man: Is thereaught in the hall now? Osberne answers from where hesat: There is but little, for Lam little. OThen they turn & see him bugging himself up in the sack, and something at his back, they cannot see what; and the goodman says: What hast thou been about all day, kinsman? Thou art for ever foolhardy & atruant; of right, stripes should pay theeforthy straying Said Osberne: I have been shepd2

35

he brings

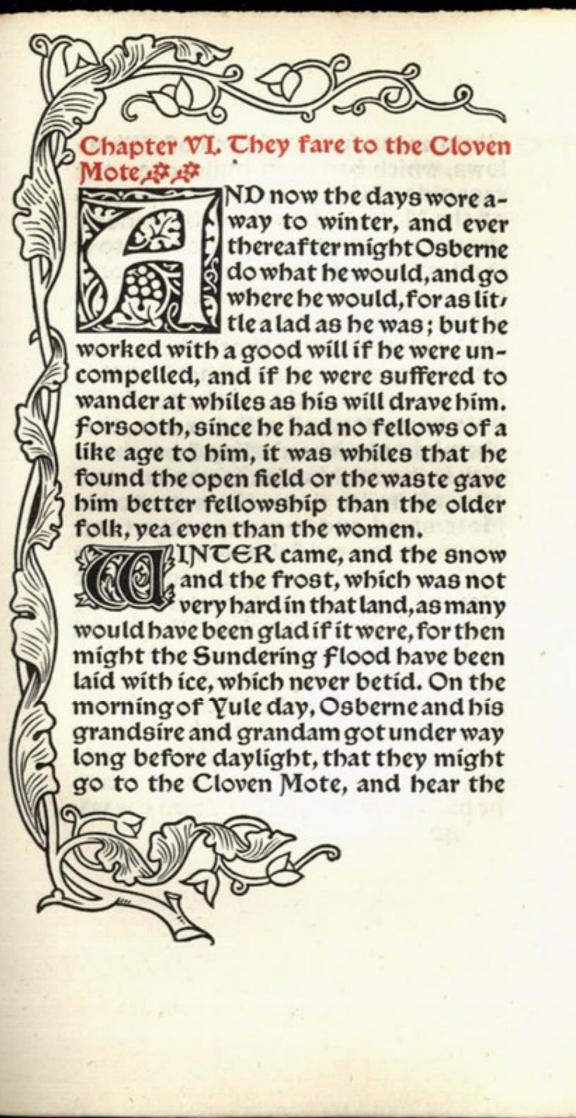
herding sheep; may it not buy me off the stripes that I have found two of the lost ones, & brought back all safe? Maybe, says the master; but did aughtelsebefall thee? Says the lad: Willitnot buy me off beating that I have also brought home catch? @ Yea, if the catch be good, says the goodman It is but a leash of snipes, which I got me in a corner of the bog up yonder, saysOsberne & Snipes says Bridget; deft art thou, fosterling, to take them without either springe or stone, bow, & they all flittering like butterflies on a March day F Yea, auntie, saith he, but a stone or two might avail without the bow, were one deft enough. Yet with no such weapons did I slay them: ask mewhat weapons I bore against them. . Therewith he stirs and shakes himself, and off tumbles the sack from his shoulders, & therewith his grandame lights up the candles, and they all see the scarlet and gold of his holiday rais ment; and Bridget says: This also will Laskthee, fosterling, do men go out to take snipes in their holiday raiment?

I will tell thee, says the little lad: the Osberne weapons I bore against the catch were sings the shield to ward, and the spear to thrust, & the knife for the shearing of the heads: & I tell thee that when men go to battle they use to wend in their fair/dyedraiment @ Then he stood up in the hall, the little one, but trim and goodly, with gleaming eyes and bright bair, and a word came into his mouth:

On the wind weary bent The grey ones they went, Growled the greedy and glared On the sheep kin afeared; Low looked the bright sun On the battle begun. for they saw how the swain Stood betwixt them and gain. 'Twas the spear in the belly, the spear in the mouth. And a warp of the shield from the north to the south: The spear in the throat, and the eyes of the sun Scarce shut as the last of the battle was done.

grey wolves

The three Wellsung, kinsmans aid the goodman: now shalt thou show us the snipes But ere the lad might stoop to his bag the two women were upon him, clipping and kissing him as if they would never have enough thereof. he made a shift to thrust them off at last, and stooping to his bag he drew out something and cast it on the board, and lo the sheared off head of a great grey wolf with gaping jaws & glistening white fangs, & the women shrank before it. But Osberne said: Lothe first of the catch, and here is the second & Andagain he drew out a head from the bag and cast it on the board: & so with the third in due course Now, said he, the bag is empty, & deemest thou, grandsire, that I have bought me off my beating? And thou, grandame, I pray thee give me my meat, for I am anhungered. @Sonowthey had nought but praises and caresses for him, & they made as it were a new feast of that November day, and were as merry as if they were feasting the best days of Yule.



The churches of the Mote

Christmass in the church of Allhallows, which had been builded on the east side of the water to be the church of the Mote; but on the other side of the water was another church like to it in all ways, & under the same invocation, for the Western folk. This was the first time that Osberne had been down to the Mote. & withal both the women were wont to stay at home: but this time nought would serve the goodwife but she must wend with her man, that shemight showherdarling & hercham, pion to the neighbours. It was a matter of seven miles down the water to the Moterstead, and they went aslantover the snow/covered fields, & hit the river/ bank about half way, and went thence along the very lip of the water. And by then it was pretty much daylight; and Osbernelooked over the water & sawar bouthalframileoff, for the day was clear, two little knolls rising from the field, & betwixt them and about them a show of small wood; & he asked his grandsire what that might be, for hitherto he had never been so far down the way

ter: whereas before he slew the wolves, Of hart Shaw down the water was banned to him, & Knolls after that he had been busy about the houses and folds, or driving the sheep to the bents day by day. So his grandsire answered him: That is hight hart Shaw, & we are told that on the other side of the shaw & the knolls looking west is a stead with houses inhabited. and the whole place is hight hart Shaw Knolls @ Said Osberne: I would we were there awhile, for as I look at the stead it seemeth friendly to me, and I fare to feel that the folk thereof shall comeinto my life some day . Hnswer, ed the goodman: We hear that little dwelleth there save a widow woman & ber one child, a little maiden. And as to thy one day, it shall be a long while coming; for long & long shall it be for anyone to encompass the Sundering flood, save the Winter of fear comeup, on us, and all the land be overlaid with ice, &thewaters of the flood be stayed; which may God and Allhallows forfend & The ladsaid nought for a while; & then he said: Goodman, I would we

The carle fears the peril of the flood/bank

had gone down to river bank from out our own door, and gone all along the flood/sidetotheMote:foritwereplear sant to have looked across the flood, thinking of all there is on the other side, & wondering if we shall ever get there. Mhy did we not this, for on the very bank the going is better? Said the carle: The have come the shortest way this bitter winter morning; that is all. @herein belied; for they had gone that slant way to give the goby to a certain place of the flood bank which the Daler dwellers deemed perilous; but thereof he would not tell the little carle, now that he was become so masterful, deeming that if he heard of any peril toward he would be all agog to try the adventure thereof, as forsooth was true. Of this place, which lay now but just behind them, shall more be told hereafter.

good time when the sun was but just arisen, & there was already a throng; & at their coming the folk on the western side raised a shout, as the

folk on either side were wont to wel- Surly John comenewcomers; but the very first man must beark they hit upon was Surly John; and the en the goodwife, a soft, kind woman, bailed grandame's him friendly, & was fain to have some- tale one whom she knew unto whom to tell her tale of the champion & the wolves. for indeed it needs must out to the very first comer, and out it came now, many worded, & folk, both men and women, gathered about the twain to hearken. for the good wife told it all well & with, outhitch. Surly John must needs abide the telling of it, but when it was done hesaid: Well, dame, so it is that I always deemed the lad kenspeckle; and it has moreover turned out as I warned you, that you have got a new master over you And therewith he turned away; but of those others who heard the tale there were more than one or two who praisedit much, & deemed it marvellous as might well be that a child should have faced & slain those three monsters who had put two stout men to flight. And one man made up this stave, which was presently sungallabout the East-

The stave against Surly John

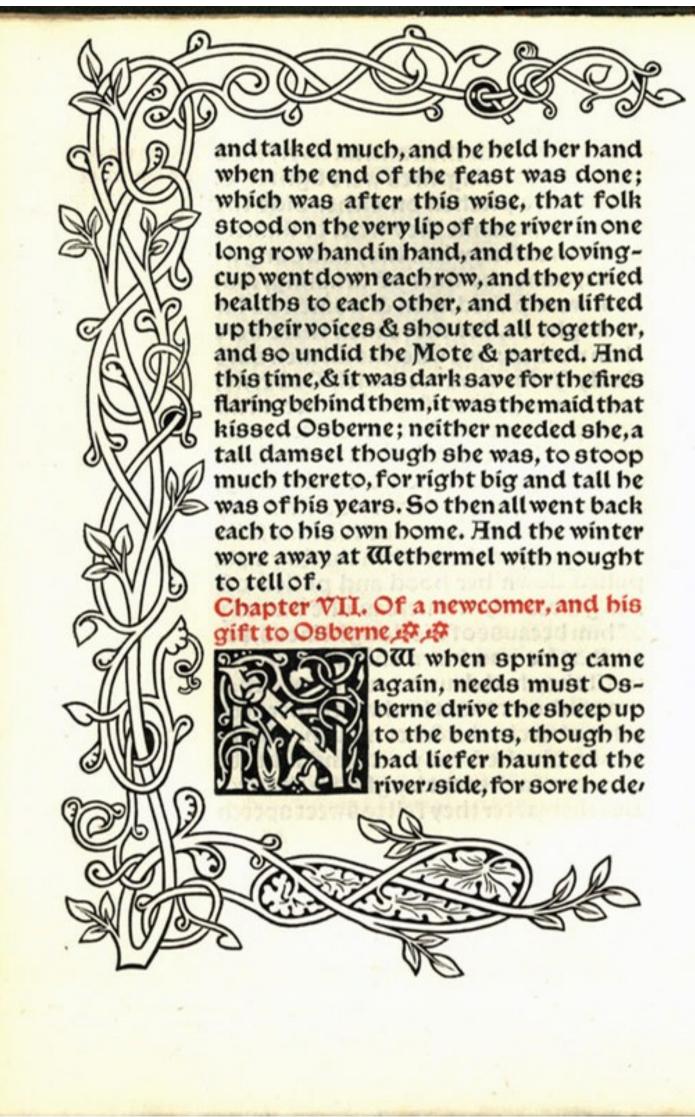
ern Mote, and went over the water with the tale to the Western one:

To run and to fight Hre deeds free to the wight, And John tried in battle had heard the boards rattle, But needed to prove The race back to the stove: So his wightness he showed In way wearing the road. While Osberne, who knew how the foot race to do, Must try the new game Where the battle beasts came. Bairn for fight, but for running the strong man and tall, And all folk for the laughter when both are in ball.

When Surly John heard this stave he cursed between his teeth, but said nought.

es fell to ringing to mass, and all folk fared to service. And Osberne sat in a good place amongst the carles, & forsooth behad both ears and

eyes open both then and all day. Mass Osberne & over, the cooking fires were lighted & the damsel tents were pitched on either side the water, & in a while they went to dinner: and thereafter, when they had sung awhile, came the time of drinking, and folk were paired, men & women so far as might be, for more men there were than women: but whereas all men save Surly John were well with Osberne, there was gotten for his mate a fair voung damsel of but seventeen winters, and Osberne, who had looked hard on all the women who were well-liking, for he had seen but very seldom any women savethose two of his kinsfolk. was amazed with joy when the dearmaid pulled down her bood and pulled off her gloves. And whereas she was shy of him because of his doughtiness, for all that he was but a child, it was not until they had drunk a cup or two that he took heart to set his hand to her neck & kiss her cheeks & her mouth, whereat she blushed rosy red, and all they that were in the tent laughed & cheered. But thereafter they fell to sweet speech



sired to cross the flood and find out Osberne tidings there. And though he were a drives the child, yet he would by his own choice sheep to the have fared to seek out the pretty maiden bents whose hand he had held on the edge of the river that even, but livelihood drave him to look to the sheep now that the spring grass was growing.

on a certain day when March was wearing towards April he drave his sheep up over the crown of the bent; and there he went with them a way where, the land still rising, the ground was hard and rocky but clean, and the grass sweet for as scanty as it was, growing in little hollows & shelters round about the rocks. Therefore the sheep were nimble in their feeding, and led him on long, till they & he were come into a grassy little dale with a stream running through it. There they were neither to hold nor to bind, but strayed all up and down the dale & over the crest of the bent thereof, and would not come to his call; & his dog was young and not very wise, & could do little to help him: so hebe-

H newcomer gan to think he had best gather what of the sheep he could, and drive them homeandfoldthem, & thencome back and hunt for the rest, perhaps with the help of his grandsire; but as the ones he could get at were all close anigh, and he was hot & weary with running hither and thither and holloaing to sheep & dog, he would go down to the stream and drink & restawhile first. Hndeven so he did, & lay down by the water and drankalong draught; but while he was about it he thought he heard footsteps coming down the hillside over the greensward. howsoever, he had his drink out, & then rose to his knees and looked up, & therewith sprang hastily to his feet, for a tall man was coming on towards him not ten yards from the stream, on the further side of it. he was not to say afeard by the sight, yet somewhat startled, for the man was not his grandsire, nor for sooth did he seem to be one of the Daleidwellers. for he was so clad that he had a grey hauberk on him of fine ring/mail, and a scarlet coat thereunder embroidered goodly;

a big gold ring was on his left arm, a They speak bright basnet on his head; he was girt together with a sword, & bare a bow in his hand, and a quiver hungathis back. he was a goodly man, young by seeming, bright, faced & grey reyed; his hair was yellow and as fine as silk, & it hung down over his shoulders.

Om Osberne put as good a face on the meeting as he might, and gave the newcomer the sele of the day, & he hailed him again in a clear loud voice, and they stood looking on each other across the stream awhile. Then the newcomer laughed pleasantly and said: Bast thouany name that I may call thee by? @ I am Osberne of Wethermel, said the youngling & Hha, said theman, art thou be that slew the leash of great grey wolves last autumn, who had put two armed men to flight the day before? Said Osberne, redden, ing: Mell, what was I to do? There fell aleash of hill dogs on our sheep, and I made them forbear. Was it a scathe to thee, lord? The newcomer laughed again: Nay, my lad, said he, I love them

The newcomer drives the sheep down no more than ye do; they were no dogs of mine. But what doest thou here? Thou seest, said the youngling, that I am shepherding our sheep; & a many have run from me, and I cannot bring them back to me. So I was going home with those that be left. Mell, says the man, we can soon mend that. Rest thou here and abide my coming back again, and I will fetch them for thee Mith a good will, says Osberne, and I shall can thee many thanks therefor.

the stream, and went his ways up the further bent, & Osberne sat down on a stone & abode him in no little wonder. The man was gone somewhat more than an hour, & then Osberne sees the sheep topping the crest of the bent and pouring down into the dale, and the newcomer came next driving them down; & when they came to the stream they stood there and moved no more than if they were penned.

them up to Osberne, and said in a kind voice, though it was loud:

What, art thou here yet? I deemed that Osberne thou wouldst have run home. Wallby tells his age should I have run? said the lad ofor fear of me, said the other, Said Osberne: I was somewhat afeard when I first saw thee, and thou with the grev byrny & the gleaming helm; but then I saw that thou wert no ill man, & I fear, ed thee no longer. Withal I was fain to see the eagain; for thou art goodly and fair to behold, and I am fain to remember thee Said the man: Even so have others said ere now Watere they women? said Osberne @ Thou art brisk & keen, youngling, said the man. Yes, they were women: but it was long ago. Wet thou lookest no old man, said Osberne. I have seen old men: they be nought like to thee B heed thou not that, said the belmed man: but tell me, how old a man art thou? Said Osberne: When this April is three days old I shall be thirteen years old @ Said the man of the waste: Well, thou art stalwart for thy years, and that liketh me well, and meseems that we shall be friends bereafter: and when thou arta

2

the waste gives him a bow

The man of grownman I shall seem noolder to thee; nay, we shall be as brothers. Belike I shall see the eagain before long; mean, while, I give thee this rede: when thou mayest, seek thou to the side of the Sundering flood, for meseemeth that there lieth thy weird. Now there is this last word to besaid, that I came hither torday to see thee, and in token thereof I have brought thee a gift. Canst thou shoot in the bow aught? Said Osberne: There is one at home, and my grandsire hath bent it for meat whiles, &taught me how to shoot somewhat: but I am little deft therein.

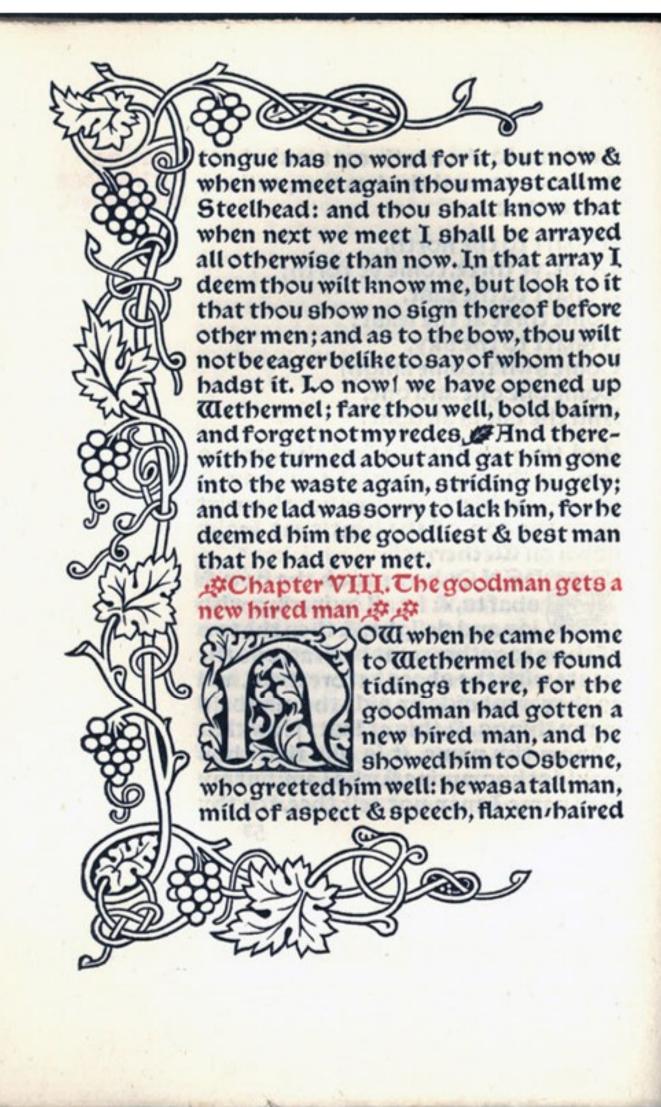
bentheman betook him the bow which he had in his hand & said: bere is one that shall make thee deft; for whose bath this as a gift from me shall bit what he shooteth at if he use my shafts withal, & here be three which I will give thee; and if thou take heed, thou shalt not find them easy to lose, since ever they shall go home. But if everthou lose two of them, then take the third and go into some waste place wherethereisneithermeadownoracre.

and turn to the north/east and shoot They go upwards toward the heavens, and say back across this rhyme:

H shaft to the north,
Come, ye three, come ye forth;
H shaft to the east,
Come three at the least;
H shaft to the sky,
Come swift, come anigh!
Come one one and one,
Hnd the tale is all done.

And then shalt thou find the arrows lying at thy feet. Now take the bow & arrows, and drive me thy sheep betwixt us to the top of the bent that looks down on Methermel.

shafts, & he all quivering with joy and delight; & then the two of them together went back across the waste with the sheep before them, and as they went side by side the man said many things, & this at last: Now that I know thy name, it is like that thou wouldstknow mine & who Lam; but my very name I may not tell thee, for thy



& bluereyed, and seemed a stark carle. Stephen hehad come to the stead that morning the Eater while the goodman was away, and had craved guesting of the women, who made him welcome & set him down to meat. He told them that his name was Stephen, that he had been born in the country/side, but had gone thence in his early youth to East Cheaping, which was the market town whither that folk had resort; and that he had grown up there and then wedded a wife; but that when she died in childing with her first bairn, and the bairn had not lived, he loathed the place, and came back again into the Dale.

Owhen the goodman came home this Stephen offered himself to him, and said that he deemed he could do as good a stroke of work as another, and that he was not for any great wage, but he must not be stinted of his meat, whereas he was a heavy feeder. The goodman liked the looks of him, and they struck the bargain betwixt them straightway, and Stephen had hansel of a second dinner, and ate

dles the bow

Stephen ban- well thereat; & benceforth is be called

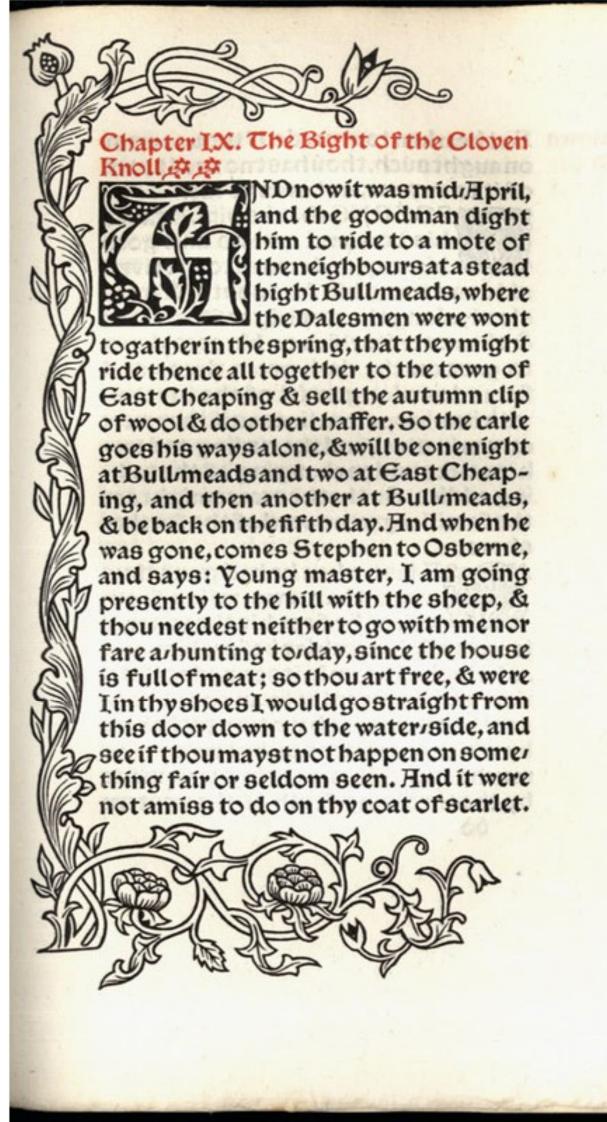
Stephen the Eater.

when the goodman saw Osberne bring in his new weapon, he asked him whence he had it, and the lad told him that he had been far in the waste, and had found it there. The goodman eyed him, but said nought. forsooth he misdoubted him that the bow was somewhat unked, and that the lad had some new dealings with theDwarfikinorotherstrangewights. But then he bethought him of Osberne's luck, & withal it came into his mind that now he had gotten this victualwaster it would not be ill if his lad should shoot them some venison or fowl nowandagain; and by the look of the bow he deemed it like to be a lucky one. But Stephen reached out for the bow, and handled it & turned it about, & spake: This is a handy weapon, and they who made it were not without craft, & it pleases me to see it; for now, when it brings home prey in the evening, the goodman will deem my maw the less burdensome to him. By my

rede, goodman, ye will do well to make Osberne thy youngling the hunter to us all, for makes trial such bows as this may be shot in only of his bow by them that be fated thereto FAnd he nodded and smiled on Osberne, & the laddeemed that the new man would be friendly to him. So then was supper brought in, and Stephen the Eater played as good a part as if he had eaten nought since sunrise.

THE THE next day, when Stephen was bound for driving the sheep to the bent, he said to Osberne: Come thou with me, young master, to show me the way; and bring thy bow and arrows withal, & see if thou canst shoot us something toothsome, for both of feathers & fur there is foison on the hillside @ So they went together, & betwixt whiles of the shepherd, ing Osberne shot a whole string of heath/fowl and whimbrel; and ever he hit that which he shot at, so that the arrows were easy indeed to find, since they never failed to be in the quarry.

he slays a hart of ten tines The goodman was well pleased with his said with his catch, & Stephen licked hislipsoverthelookofthelarder. And the next day the lad let Stephen goalone to the hill, & he himself took a horseand went up the water a ten mile toward the mountain, & there he slew a hart of ten tines with one arrow, and brought the quarry home across the horse, to the joy of all the household, &the goodman was not rueing his bargain with Stephen the Eater. Soit went on that every two or three days Osberne fared afield after catch, & but seldom came home empty/handed, & the other days he did as he would & went where he listed. And now he began to follow the rede of Steelhead, & went oftenestby the side of the Sundering flood, but as yethehad gone up the water and not down.



the water

he goes down Buthearken to my rede, if thou comest onaught such, thou has tno need to tell of it to anyone, not even to me.

> SBERNEthankshim, & takes his bow and arrows and goes his way, and comes to the river, side and turns his face south, & goes slowlyalong the very edge of the water; & the water itself drew his eyes down to gaze on the dark green deeps and fierce downlong swirl of the stream, withits sharp clean lines as if they were carven in steel, and the curling and upheaval & sudden changing of the talk, ing eddies. So that he scarce might see the familiar greensward of the further shore.

> T last, when he had gone thus more than two miles from where he first hit the water, a longstraight reach lay before him, and as he looked down it, it seemed as if the river came presently to an end; but in sooth there was a sharp turn to the east by which the water ran, but narrowing much; and this narrowing was made by the thrusting forth of the western

bank into a sharp ness, which from where Osberne now stood showed a wide flank facing, as it seemed, the whole hurrying stream of the flood: but the stream turned ere it smote the cliff, & striving for the narrow outgate made a prodigious eddy or whirlpool ere it might clear itself of the underwater foot of the ness and make eastward so as to rush on toward the sea. But in the face of the wall, in the bight where the whirlpool turned from it. was a cave the height of a tall man, and some four feet athwart; and below it a ledge, thrust out from the sheer rock & hanging over the terrible water, and it was but a yard wide or so. It was but ten feet above the water, and from it to the grass above must have been a matter offorty feet. But the ness as it thrust forthintotheriverrosealso, so that its crest was a score of feet higher where it went down into the water than its base amidst the green grass. Then came the strait passage of the water, some fif-

ty feet across, and then the bank of the eastern side, which, though it thrust

The Bight of the Cloven Knoll maiden

The little notout, but rather was as it were driven back by the stream, yet it rose toward the water, though not so much as the ness over against it. It was as if some, one had cast down a knoll across the Sundering flood, and the stream had washed away the sloped side thereof, and then had sheared its way through by the east side where the ground was the softest. for sooth so it seemed to the Dalesmen, for on either side they called it the Bight of the Cloven Knoll.

overagainst the cave in the cliff, side, & stared at the boiling was ters beneath him, that seemed mighty enough to have made a hole in the ship of the world & sunkit in the deep. And he wondered at the cave, whether it were thereby chance hap, or that some hands had wrought it for an habitation.

NDashestoodgazing there, on a sudden there came out of the cave ashape as of man, & stood upon the ledge above the water, & the lad saw at once that it was a little maiden of aabout his own age, with ruddy golden

water

hair streaming down from her head, & They talk she was clad in a short coat of dark blue across the stuffandno more raiment, as far as be could see. Now, as aforesaid, Osberne was in his holiday raiment of red scarlet by the bidding of Stephen. Now the maiden looks up & sees the ladstand, ing on the eastern shore, & starts back astonished. Then she came forward again and looked under the sharp of her hand, for the sun shone from the south & was cast back dazzling from the water. There was but some fifty feet of water between them, but all gurgling and rushing and talking, so the child raised a shrill and clear voice as she clapped her hands together & cried: O thou beauteous creature, what artthou? Osbernelaughed, &saidin a loud voice: I am a man, but young of years, so that they call me a boy, and a bairn, and a lad. But what art thou? Nay, nay, she said, I must be nigher to thee; it is over, wide here amidst the waters' speech. fare up to the top on thy side, & so will I . And therewith she turned about and fell to climbing

She climbs the cliff, side

up the side of the cliff by the broken black staves and the shaly slips. And though Osberne were a boy, yea and a tough one in some ways, he trembled & his heart beat quick to see the little creature wending that perilous upright road, and he might not take his eyes off her till she had landed safely on the greensward; then he turned and went swiftly up the eastern knoll, & reached the edge of the sheer rock just as the maiden came running up the ness on her side. He spake not, for he was eyeing her closely, & shemight not speak awhile for lack of breath. Ht last she said: Now are we as near to each other aswemaybetorday; yeaformanydays, oritmaybe for all our lives long: so now letustalk @Shesethertwofeettogethe er&heldherhands in front of her, & so stoodasifshelooked for him to begin. Butthewordscamenotspeedilytohis mouth, and at last she said: I wonder whythou wilt not speak again; for thy laughwas as the voice of a dear bird; & thy voice is beauteous, so loud & clear. Fre laughed, and said: Well then, I

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will speak. Tell me what thou art. Art She questhougfthe faery? for thouart too well tions him shapen to be of the Dwarfikin & She clappedherhandstogether&laughed; then she said: I laughed not as mocking thy question, but for joy to hear thy voice again. Nay, nay, Lam no faery, but of the children of men. But thou, art thou not of the sons of the Landwights? Nomore than thou art, said he. Lamagoodman's son, but my father is dead, and my mother also, & I live at home at Wethermel up the water, with my grandsire & grandame & Saidshe: Hre they kind to thee? The laddrew himself up: Iam kindto them, saidhe. Bhowgoodly thouart, she said; that was why I dreamed thou must be of the Landwights, because I have seen divers men, someold, some young like to thee, but none half so goodly & hesmiled, and said: Well, I thought thou wert of the faery because thou art goodly and little. I have seen a pretty maid not longsince, but she was older than thou, Ideem, &fartaller. But tellme, howold artthou? Shesaid: When Mayishalf 65

Of Elfhild's folk

worn I shall be of thirteen winters Lo now, said he, we be nigh of an age; I was thirteen in early April. But thou hast not told me where thou dwellest, and how @ She said: I dwell at hart ShawKnolls hard by. I am the daughter of a good man, as thouart, & my father &mother are dead, so that my father I never saw, & now I dwell with my two aunts, &they be both older than was my mother # Are they kind to thee? said thelad, laughing that he must cast back herquestion @ Whiles, said she, laugh, ing also, and whiles not: maybe that is because I am not always kind to them, as thou art to thy folk the answered nought, & she was silent awhile; then be said: What is in thy mind, maiden? OThis, she said, that I am thinking how fair a chance it was that I should have seen thee, forthou hast made me so glad Said he: We can see each otheragain belikeand make it less of a chance O yea, she said, & was silent awhile & Saidhe: I wot not why it was that thou wert in the cave: & tell me, is it not exceeding perilous, the climbing

up and down? why wilt thou do that? The cave Hiso I must tell thee, that this was an above the other cause why I thought thou wert of flood faery, that thou camestout of the cave. HID she: I will tell thee all about

the cave; but first as to the peril of going thither and coming thence: wouldst thou be very sorry if I were lost on the way? D Yea, said he, exceeding sorry Well, said she, then fear it not, for it is so much a wont of mine that to me there is no peril therein: yet am I glad that thou wert afraid for me. I was sore afraid, said Osberne. Now as to the cave, said the maiden. I found it out two years ago, when I was very little, and the women had been less than kind to me. And thither may I go whenas I would that they should seek me not; because folk say that it is a dwelling of the Dwarfs, and they fear to enterit. Besides, when I think of my kinswomen coming down the rock to find me therein, and they be tall, & one stiff, as if she were cut out of timber, and the other exceeding fat, that makes me merry!

f2

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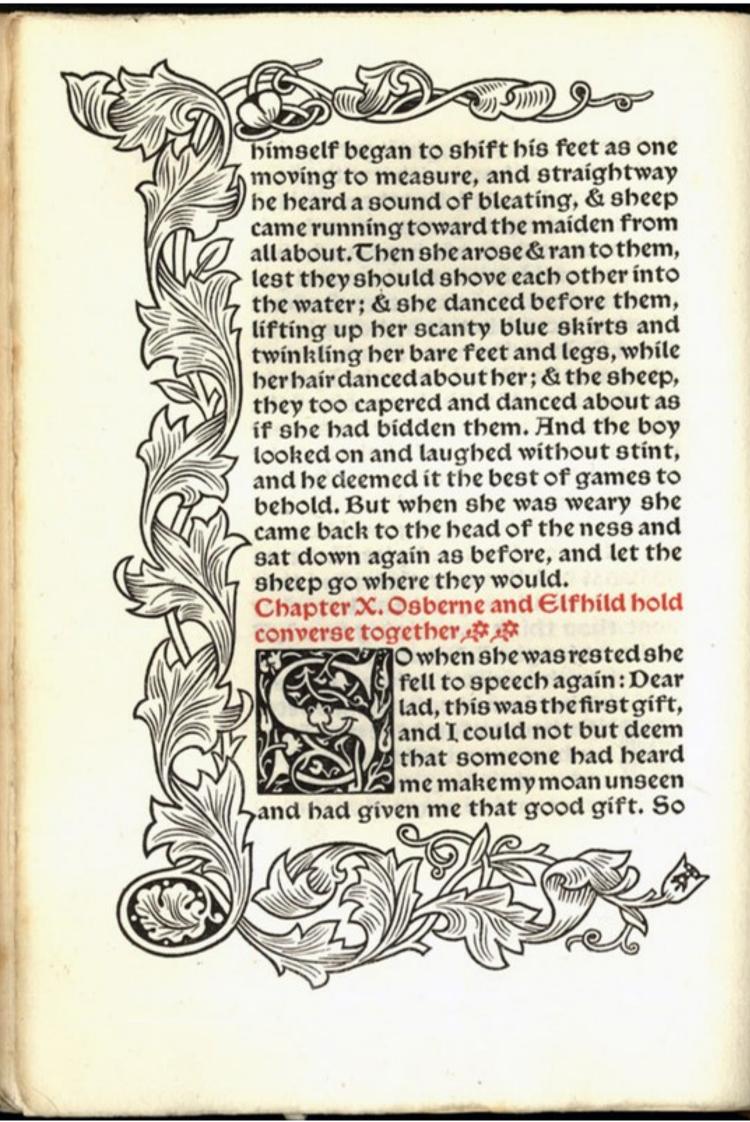
The Dwarfs' gifts to Elfi hild

ND therewith she sat down on the very edge of the cliff with her little legs hanging over the water, and laughed, rocking to and fro in her laughter, and Osberne laughed also. But he said: But art thou not afraid of the Dwarfs? She said: Dear bairn, or boy, I had been there many times before I heard tell of the Dwarfs. and I gat no harm, & after I had heard the tale I went still, and still gat no harm. May I tell thee somewhat? I gat gifts, or such they seemed unto me. first I had to herd the sheep and take them to the best grass, & whiles they strayed and were wear isome to me, and I came home with divers missing, and then would I be wyted, or even whipped, for what was no fault of mine. And one such time, I betook me to the cave and sat therein and wept, and complained to myself of my harm, & when Iwentoutof the cave I saw on the ledge close to my foot a thing lying, and I took it up, and saw that it was a pipe with seven holes therein, and when I blew into it it made sweet and merry

littlemusic. So I thought it great prize, The little and went away home with it with all my pipe sorrows well healed. But the next day I drove my sheep to grass, as my business was, and, as oft happened, they strayed, and I followed them and gat nothingdone: so I was weary. & afraid of what would betide at home in the stead. So I sat down on a stone, & when I had wept a little I thought I would comfort myself with the music of the pipe. But lo, a wonder! for no sooner had a note or two sounded, than all the sheep came running up to me, bleating and mowing, and would rub against my sides as I sat piping, and home I brought every head in all glee. And even so has it befallen ever since; and that was hard on a year agone. fair boy, what dost thou think I am doing now? Osberne laughed. Disporting thee in speech with a friend, said he Nay, said she, but I am shepherding sheep. ND shedrew forth the pipe from

her bosom and fell to playing it, and a ravishing sweet melody

came thence, and somerry, that the lad



what must I do but try it again, & one The golden day I went down into the cave and fell necklace to bewaiting me that I had nought to deckme with, neither of gold norsilver, as other maidens had, for in sooth I had seen them with such things. And when I had done, I went forth on to the ledge, and this time I trod cautiously lest I should kick the dainty thing into the water, and lo, there lay this pretty thing . And she drew forth from her bosomanecklaceofgold&gems;gold and emerald, gold and sapphire, gold andruby; and it flashed in the sun, and Osberne thought it a fair toy indeed, but knew not that scarce a queen had got aught so fair in her treasure @ Ye may wot well that I dare not show either this or the pipe to my aunts, who would have taken them away from me & cried horror at them; for oft would they cry out at the evil things that dwelt in the ness & all the ills they brought on the children of men. So I play on the pipe when none are by, & I deck myself sit, ting in the sun with this fair necklace. Look thou, lad, for it is a joy to show

caverfolk

The third meunto thee so decked Hnd she did gift of the back her raiment from her thinneck, & it was white as snow under the woollen, and shedid on the necklace, & Osberne thought indeed that it sat well there, and that her head & neck looked grand

and graithly.

THEN she said: One other gift I gat from these cave folk, if there be such in the cave. On a day I was ailing, and could scarce hold up my head for weariness & sickness; so I stole down hither and clomb with all trouble and peril down to the cave, and fell to bewaiting my sickness, and scarce had I done ere I felt exceeding drowsy, and so laid me down on the floor of the cave and fell asleep there, feeling sick no longer even then. And when Lawoke, after some three hours as I deemed, there was nought amiss with me, & I climbed up to grass again strong and merry, and making nought of the climb. And even so have I done once and again, & never have the good folk failed me herein. hast thou ever had dealings with such like creatures? Soberne answered, and told her of Osberne the his meeting with the Dwarf that time, slaver of and held up to her the whittle he had wolves got, and flashedit in the sun; and then he was about to tell her of Steelhead. But he remembered that he was scarce free to tell any one of him, so he held his peace thereof; but he said: Meseemi eth, maiden, that thou art not without might, such friends as thou hast. But tell me, what canst thou do beside the shepherding? She said: I can spin and weave, & bake the bread and make the butter, & grind meal at the guern; but the last is hard work, and I would not do it uncompelled, nor forsooth theindoorwork either, for nought but the shepherding is to my mind. But nowtell me, what canst thou do? # he said: Meseems I cannot keep my sheep together so well as thou; but last autumn I learned how to slav wolves that would tear the sheep.

the better, and strained her hands together hard, & gazed eagerly at him. Desaw that she was won

She will know what else he can do

dering at him and praising him, so he said lightly: It is no so great a matter as some think; what is most needed is a good heart and a quick eye. Thus I slew the three of them O, she said, now I know that thou art that fair child and champion of whom I have heard tell, that thy deed was a wonder; and now thou art so kind that thou wilt wear the day talking to a poor & feeble maiden. Said he: I do that because it is my will and it pleases me to see theeand talk to thee, for thouart good to look at and dear & Then she said: But what else canst thou do, Champion? Saidhe: Of late I am thought to be somewhat deft at shooting in the bow, so that whatso I aim at, that I hit. Thus I am not like to lack formeat. Yea, she said, but that is wonderful; and besides, now canst thou shoot at the wolves from a far without their being able to come at thee to bite thee. But now it is hard to get thee to tell of thy prowess, and I must ask after every deal. Tell me of something else. @ Quoth he: Ht home they deem me

somewhat of a scald, so that I can She bids smithy out staves & She clapped her him sing a hands together and cried: Nowthat is stave good indeed, since thou can stal so slay wolves. But how sweet it would be for me to have thee making a stave before me now. Mouldst thou? @ I wot not, he said, laughing; but let me try & So he sat down and fell to conning his rhymes, while she stood looking on from across the water. Ht last he stood up and sang:

out the grass groweth free, And the lily's on lea, And the Aprilitide green Is full goodly beseen; Hnd far behind Lies the winter blind. And the lord of the Gale Is shadowy pale: And thou, linden berblossomed, with bed of the worm Comest forth from the dark house as spring from the storm.

O barmicloth tree. The light is in thee, Osberne's song And as spring/tide shines
Chrough the lily lines,
So forth from thine heart
Chrough thy red lips apart
Came words and love
Co wolf/bane's grove,
And the shaker of battle/board blesseth the Earth
for the love and the longing, kind
craving and mirth.

May I forget
The grass spring/wet
And the quivering stem
On the brooklet's hem,
And the brake thrust up
And the saffron's cup,
Each fashioned thing
from the heart of Spring,
Long ere I forget it, the house of thy
word
And doors of thy learning, the roof of
speech/hoard.

Mhen thou art away In the winter grey, Chrough the hall reek then And the din of men

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Elfhild speaks

Shall I yet behold
Sif's hair of gold
And Hild's bright feet,
The battle fleet,
And from threshold to hearthstone,
like as songs of the South,
To and fro shall be fleeting the words
of thy mouth.

BEN his song dropped down, & they stood looking silently at each other, and tears ran over the little maiden's cheeks. But she spake first, and said: Most lovely is thy lay; and there is this in it, that I see thou hast made it while thou wert sitting there, for it is all about thee and me, & how thou lovest me & I thee. And full surely I know that thou wilt one day be a great and mighty man. Yet this I find strange in thy song almost to foolish, ness, that thou speakest in it as I were a woman grown, & thou a grown man, whereas we be both children. And look. heed it, what sunders us, this mighty flood, which hath been from the begin, ning and shall be to the end.

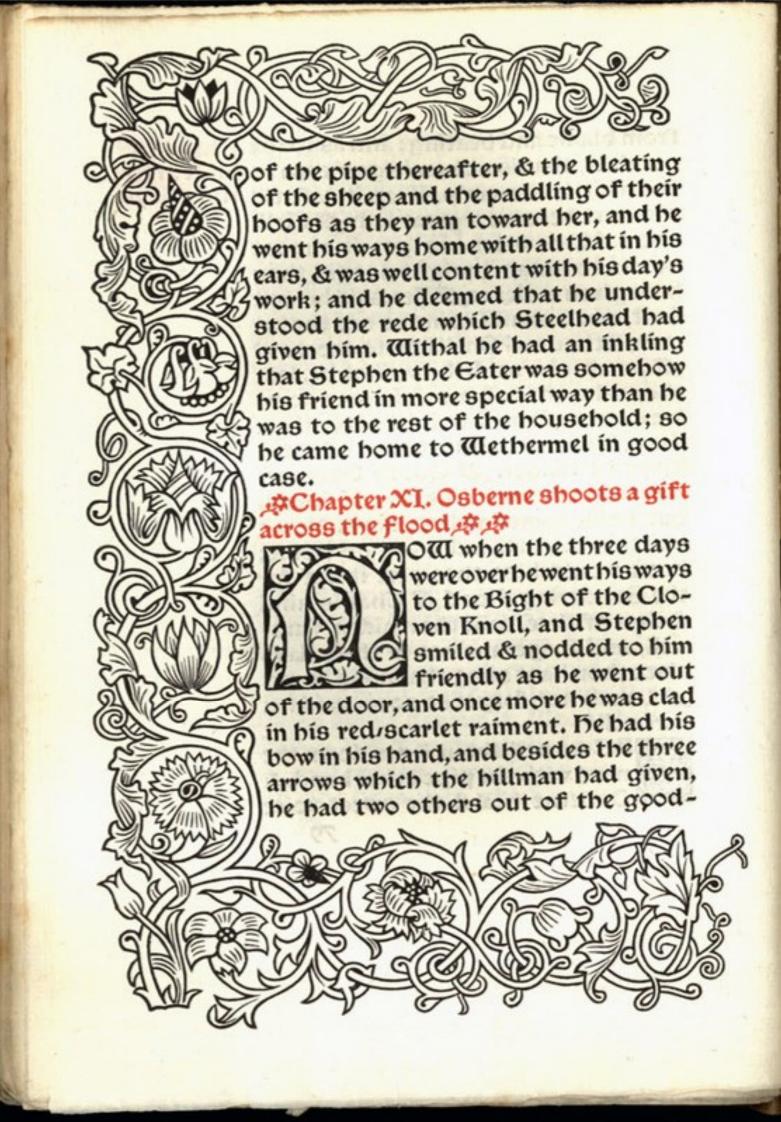
Elfhild must go bomeward

he said: I might not help it; the words came into my mouth, & meseems they be better said than un, said. Look to it if I do not soon some deed such as bairns benot used to doing That I deem is like to be, she said, vet it shall be a long time ere folk shall call us man & woman. But now. fair child, I must needs go homeward, and thou must let me go or I shall be called in question & Yea, said Osberne; yet I would give thee a gift if I might, but I know not what to give thee save it were my Dwarf, wrought whittle, @ Shelaughedandsaid: That were a gift for a man, but not for me; keep it safe, dear and kind lad. I for my part were fain of giving thee somewhat; but as formy pipe, I fearme that I could never throw it across the water. I would I might reach thee with my gold & gem necklace, but I fear for it lest the Sundering flood devour it. What shall I do then? Nought at all, dear maiden, said the lad. I would no wise take thy pipe from thee, which saveth thee 78

from blame and beating; and as to the They will necklace, that is woman's gear even as meet after the whittle is man's. Keep it safe till three days thou art become a great lady @ Mell. she said, now let me go; it almost seems to me as I might not till thou hast given me leave & Yea, said he; but first, when shall I come to see thee again, &thoume? Shallit be to morrow? O nay, she said, it may not be, lest they take note of me if I come down here over often. Let it be after three days first: and then the next time it must be longer. @ Quoth Osberne: Let the next time take care of itself: but I will come in three days. Now I bid thee depart, and I will go home; but I would kiss thee were it not for the Sundering flood @ That is kind & dear of thee, said the maiden. farewell, and forget me not in three days since thou hast sung that song tome. I shall not forget so soon, said he. farewell

The turned about & ran down the

ness with the pipe in her hand, & Osberne heard the sweet voice



man's quiver. Moreover he had thought Elfhild is over from time to time what he might decked with give to the maiden, and now be had in the Dwarfs' his pouch a fair gold piece which his necklace mother had given him when he was yet very young, and he thought that this were a fair gift might he but get it over to the other side of the Sundering flood.

when he was within eyether, and saw a little figure on shot of the ness he looked this the crest thereof, and knew that the maiden had prevented him & was there already, so behastened all he might to hisown vantage ground, and straight, way he gave her the sele of the day, and she greeted him kindly. Then be looks and sees that she is somewhat decked out for this meeting, for not only did the Dwarfs' gift, the necklace, gleam Eglitteron her littleflat child's bosom, but also she had made her a wreath for her head of the spring flowers, and another had she done about her loins. She stood there saying nothing awhile, and it seemed to him that she

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gift

Osberne's was waiting for him to praise this new, wroughtadornment. Sohesaid: Thou art in fairer guise than when first I saw thee; is there any high tide toward at thy stead? Nay, she said; I did this because I looked to see thee torday, . whereas the other time we happed on each other unawares. But hast thou done any more great deeds? Fe laughed & said: Nay, nay, let me growa fewdays older yet. Nevertheless there is this new thing, that this morning I have brought thee a gift which I deem I may flit to thee, and I shall give it to thee with a good will if thou wilt promise that thou wilt not part with it ever Mith all my heart will I promise that, she said; but tell me what it is; show it to me B he drew it forth and held it up between his finger & thumb, & said: It is a golden penny, very fair, and I deem it comes from some far country. My mother gave it to me when Iwas very young; yet I remember that she bade me part not with it, save I should give it to one unto whom I wish, ed all luck, for that she deemed that

luck went with it. Now thou art so fair Elfhild and so dear, & my only fellow of a like will not age, that I wish luck to thee as much as have him luck can be found; so I will flit it to shoot away thee this wise, that I will do it up in a piece of cloth and tie it to the head of this arrow, which is of no account, & shoot it over to thee Hnd therewith he knelt down and fell to wrapping it up in the rag.

his luck

S for the maiden, she was all eager and quivering with joy at the getting of such a gift; yet she spake and said: O how good thou art to me: yet I deem not that thou shouldst give me thy mother's gift. And moreover why should st thou shoot away thy luck? It may be that I am not doomed to be lucky, as surely thou art; and it may well be that thou mayst give me thy luck and make thee less lucky, without eking mine, if unluck be my weird.

though he had set his heart on giving the gold to the fair child. yetherwords seemed wise to him,

andhesaid: What then shall we do?

g2

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gold and the luck

They will She said: Hbide awhile till I think of share the it. So they were silentawhile, both of them, till the little maid looked up and said: Is it a round thing? WYea, said he mhat is there upon it? she said. Quoth Osberne: On one side be two warriors, & on the other the Rood and certain letters @ She thought again & said: how much were it marred if it were halved, one warrior & halfacross? Besaid: Thathangsuponthis, who has one half and who the other @She said: Dow would it be, since I can see that thou wishest that I should share thy gift, & belike thy luck also, if thou wert to do it into two halves, and keep one thyself and shoot me the other over the flood? The leaptup & fell adancing for joy as she spake, and cried out: O. but thou art wise! Now I can see that this is what my mother meant me to do, to share the gold & the luck.

out of its wrapping & drew forth his whittle, and gat a big stone and set the gold on the steel and smote it, deftly enough; for he was no ill

smith for his years. Then he stood up he shoots and cried out: There, it is done, and across the neither of the warriors is scathed, for flood there was a waste place betwixt them. Now then for the shaft and the bowl The maiden looked eagerly, with knitted brows, and soon saw Osberne take up the shaft and nock it on the bowistring. Then he said: Take heed and stand still and the halfling shall bethine. Looknow. I will send the shaft so that it shall go in the grass/grown cleft betwixt the two big stones behind thee to thy right hand . The raised his bow therewith, & saw how she gather, ed her skirts about her, as if she would not have them binder the shaft. Then he loosed, and the shaft flew, but she abode still a little; and he laughed and said: Go, maiden, & find the shaft and the gold Then she turned and ran to the cleft, and took out the arrow, and did off the wrapping with trembling fingers, and gat the gold and looked on it, & cried out: O the fair warrior! such likeshalt thou be one day upon a penny, dear child.

They tell their names

BENshe came forward again & said: Now this is strange, that neither last time nor now have we told each other our names: now I will tell thee that my name is Elfhild, of hart Shaw Knolls. What is thine? Elfhild, my child, said he, my name is Osberne, Wulfgrim's son, and I am of Methermel, as I told thee. Yet belike it is not so strange that we have not told ournames hitherto, & Ihopenoill luck will go with our telling them, for I suppose that people give each other names when there are many of them, and they would know one from another. But as to us, there be only two of us, so that if I call thee Maiden, and thou call me Swain, it had been enough. Nevertheless Lam fain of calling thee Elfhild And I am full fain of calling thee Osberne, she said. Besides, if at any time both thou and I were to depart from this country/side we might chance to meet amongst folk of many names, & thus we might the better know each other. But Olshesaid, growing exceed ing eager, dost thou know how good a 86

gift thou hast given me? for the halves Elfhild of the penny, we shall both keep them says Osfor ever, as thou knowest, and by our berne shall having them we shall know each other become a if we meet in the world without & our great man faces have become changed & Said Os, berne: I deem not that my face will change very much, at least not till I growold, nor do I think that thine will either She laughed merrily: O bairn Osberne, when thou art become a man and a great man, and art called maybe Earl Osberne Mulfgrimsson, will not thy face have changed, and thou with the beard and the fierce eyes, and the mouth that hath shouted in the battle? As for me, allhallows grant it that my facemay change: look at me, a kind of red crow now, all skinny and spindlelegged, and yet I may grow to be a fair woman; and then indeed I would be fain for thee to see me. for somehow it seems to be shown to me that thou wilt be loved of women, and love them somewhat over/much & for my part, said Osberne, I seem to see of myself that I shall have much to do slaying

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Elfhild plays on her pipe and dances

wolves and evil things, and standing before kings & getting gifts of them, so that there will be little time for me to go about loving women; yet thee I shall ever love, Elfhild, Hnd he reddened as he spake this, as though he were a youth before his time But Elfhild said: In all ways thou art kind tome, & thee shall I everlove. But now tell me, Osberne, what wouldst thou have me do torday to make game and play for thee? Said he: Call up the sheepagain to thee with the sweet little pipe, for therein is much game, She nodded her head merrily, & drew forth her pipe & played, and the sheep came bundling up as the day before; and she danced and played a long while, & Os, berne clapped his hands and laughed and egged her on, and was full fain of her dancing; & forsooth it was a wonder and delight to see her. Ht last she was wearied out, and cast herself on the grass at the very edge of the cliff. and said that she could no more. And Osberne thanked her kindly.

Owhen she had gotten her breath She telleth

again, she asked him what next of her kinsshe should do for his disport. And he bade tell him of how she lived with those two women, her aunts, and what she did from day to day. So she sat down as on the other day, with her legs hanging down over the grisly flood, and told him full sweetly of her joys and her work & her troubles. And some of the tale was piteous enough, for the two kinswomen, who were by no means old, for the eldest was only of thirty summers, were somewhat hard with the child and right careless of her, as shall be shown afterwards. But after a little she broke off and said: But Osberne, dear, these be no fairtales for thee, though thouart kind to hearken to them. I have better tales than that, of champions to wit, and ladies and castles and dragons and the like, that I have heard; some of my kinswomen, some of folk that come to our house at a pinch, for it is a poor house. And some, yea and most & the best, from an old woman who dwelleth

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faery

She telleth in a cot not far from us; and she loveth tales of the me and bath learned me much lore; and I will tell thee thereof if thou wilt hearken WI will well, saidhe, & thanks thoushalthaveofme: I would I might give thee some other gift, She said: My tale reward will be that thou shalt tell me over and over the staves thou madest last time we met, till I have them by heart. And other staves shalt thou make for me if thou wilt. Thus is the bargain struck, said the lad, now

get thee to the work.

the little maiden fell to telling him a tale of the faery, and when it was done he asked for another; but this was a long one, and wore the day down, so that Elfhild must needs depart ere it was done. Then was a talk of when the next meeting should be, and to Osberne nought was near enough save to morrow. But Elfhild said that it was nought safe. lest aught should wake up her kinswomen to asking of her whereabouts, and again the meeting was appointed for three days thence; but had it not

Stephen the Eater telleth tales coils of a deadly serpent which was strangling the life out of him, and he would wend home in all despair.

o wore the days through spring and summer & early autumn, and at Methermel all went smoothly, and the goodman there was better pleased than ever with his new man, who if he ate two men's victuals, did three men's work; as for Osberne, he loved Stephen dearly, and Stephen for his part was for ever doing something for his disport, and in two ways in special. for first he was, like Elfhild, stuffed with all kinds of tales and histories, and oft when they were out ashepherding he would tell these to Os, berne day long; & not unseldom when the tale was under way the lad would cryout: fairis thy tale, but I have heard it before, only it is different thus and thus, Hnd in sooth he had heard it from Elfhild. The other matter was that Stephen was a smith exceeding deft, & learned the craft to Osberne, so that by the end of the year he bade fair to be a good smith himself. Moreover,

whiles would Stephen take a scrap of Stephen's iron & a little deal of silver, as a silver gifts to penny or aftorin, from out of his hoard, Osberne and would fashion it into an ouch or chain or armiring, so quaintly & finely that it was a joy to look on it. And every one of these good things would Stephen give to Osberne with a friend, ly grin, and Osberne took them with a joyful heart because now he had a new thing to give to Elfhild, & each one he shot across the river unto her the soon, est that he might. But whiles, when his heart was full, Osberne would say to the smith: Thou givest me so much, and doest so well by me, that I know not how ever I am to make it good to thee Hnd Stephen would say: fear not, master, the time will come when thou may st do such good to me as shall pay for all at once.

om befell tidings on a day of the beginning of October; for the wind, which had been high and blustering all day, grew greater & greater by then candles were lighted in the hall, till it was blowing a great

A quest at

gale from the south, west, which seem, Methermel ed like to lift the house roof. Then ber fell a knocking on the house door, and Stephen went thereto and opened it, and came back with a man all dripping and tousled with the storm. he was a tall man, yellow/haired, & goodly both of face and body, but his face much hidden with a beard untrimmed; & he was clad in rags which scarce held together, and never a shoe had he to his foot. Yet was he bold and free of mien despite his poor attire. He carried some long thing under his arm wrapped up in cloth, which was bound about with twine, and sealed every here and there with yellow wax.

he goodman started up when he have the newcomer put out, and he muttered: We keep no house for the harbouring of runagates Yet he looked at Osberne withal, for he was now grown so masterful that nought was done in the house without him; & the lad stood up straightway & came to the newcomer & bade him welcome

from out the storm. Then be took him Osberne by the hand & led him up to the hearth, makes him & spake to his grandame: Goodwife. this our guest has been in rough weather without, and ere he sits down to meat with us, it were well to take him into the inner chamber and wash his feet, and find him dry raiment, The goodwife looked kindly on the guest and badehim come with her, & he went; but ere his back was turned Osberne looked on him and caught a glance of his eye, and therewith he was sure that, despite his rags & wretchedness, this was his friend Steelhead. In a while he came back into the hall, clad & shod as well as might be done in a hurry, & Osberne led him into his own seat at the board, and gave him to drink; and Stephen with alserved him with all care, so that he was in an hospitable house, save that the goodman cast somewhat grudging glances on him, but whereas he might not gainsay all the rest of his household, there was little scathe therein.

welcome

The guest giveth his bundle into Osberne's hands

AUT when the guest sat down, he took that long bundle and gave it into Osberne's hands, & said: Thou art so friendly to a gangrel man, that I make bold to ask this grace of thee also, to wit, that thou wilt heed this bundle, and let none other touch it, and give it back to me tomorrow morning ere I depart @ Osberne yeasaid to that, and took the bundle and laid it at his bed/head. And therewith the meat was brought in, and the meal was merry; for now the guest seemed so noble/looking a man and so cheerful of countenance, and so debonair, that none save the goodman thought

his maw as did Stephen.

RE THEY began drinking the guest said: I may as well tell you folks my name, since ye are so good to me, and have not asked for

any longer of his rags wherewith he had come into the hall out of the storm.

But even the goodman was better with himpresently, when he saw that, though heate & drank like a tall man, he needed no such abundance for the filling of



it, and ye must know that I am called The guest Maywearer, and that I wish increase of good unto this house. Then the cup went round, & they drank late into the night; and when they had drunk the voidee cup, Osberne led the newcomer to the guest/chamber, and kissed him with good/night, but made no show of knowing who he was.

speaks to the good-

Chapter XIII. Steelhead gives Osberne the sword Boardicleaver

hen morning was, the guestcameintothehall and found the household there, & he spake to the good wife & said: Dame, I would have

done off this raiment which ye lent me last night and done on mine, and left thinelying there, but mine I might not find. Nor thou nor anyone else, she said, shall find thy rags any more, good guest, unless they come to life when thou risest from the dead on the day of doom; for I have peaceably burned them in the garth this hour ago. God



gift

The carle's help us if the stead of Wethermel can, not spare a yard or two of homespun to a guest who cometh in stripped by thestorm & Theguest nodded kindly to her; but Osberne said: Which way ridest thou this morning, guest, for I would fain lead thee a little way? I wend south from thy door, fair master, said the newcomer; but as to riding, 'tis Shanks' maremust be my way, beast, unless I go stealing a horse Thereis no need for that, said Osberne, we can find thee a good horse, and if thou bringest him not back it will be no loss tous, as the less hay need we shall have through winter. Stephen, go thou and see to it that the horses be ready saddled & bridled when we have eaten amorsel & The guest laughed & look ed to the carle, master, and said: how sayest thou, goodman, is the gift given? The carle smiled somewhat ruefully, and said: The gift is given; and soothly it is for the youngling to givesinceall will come to him, beit more or less @ I will take it then, said the guest, since good will goeth with it; but 98

look to it, goodman, if I reward thee not therefor, for as ragged as I came into thine house.

Osberne leads Maywearer on his way

FOM therewith they break their fast; and the last night's wind has fallen utterly, and the sky is blue and the sun bright, & it is warm for that season. Then Osberne gives the sealed bundle to Maywearer, and he took it and did it on to his saddlebow, and he mounts, & Osberne also, who is dight in his fair/dyed raiment; and they set out up the Dale, and ride swiftly, and are few/spoken together. So they rode till they were past the last house, the cotto wit above told of, and then they came into a fair little clough with a bright stream running through it toward the Sundering flood; & there were bushes & small wood up and down the clough, and there Waywearer, that is to say, Steelhead, drew rein, & said to Osberne: Meseems this is as far as thouneedest leadme out, lad, so let us off horse and go down and sit by the brook.

h2

Steelhead's gift

they did, and tied their horses toathorn bush growing thereby; and Maywearer took the bundle off his horse & said to Osberne: hast thouanyguessatwhatthisgoodthing is? Osberne reddened & said: That is the sword which thou didst promise me last spring . Maywearer laughed and said: Sharp are thine eyes to see a sword through all this wrappage of cerecloth; surely they be of the warrior kin. But sooth hast thou said; this is thy sword & And therewith he fell to undoing the cloth, while the boy looked on eagerly. At last the hilts and the sheathshowednaked: the pommeland cross were of gold of beauteous and wonderful fashion, such as no smith may work now, and the grip was wrap, ped about with golden wire. And the sheath wherein lay the deadly white edges was of brown leather of oxhide, studded about with knops of gold and silver, and the peace strings were of scarlet silk with golden acorns at theends. Said Osberne: Othouartkind to have brought this for me: and may 100

I handle it now & at once? Yea, said Of Steelheadsmiling; but beware, beware1 the sword for he saw the lad lay his hand to the Boardpeace/strings; do not away the peace- cleaver strings, lest thou be tempted to draw forth the blade. for this sword is hight Board/cleaver, & was fashioned by the fathers of long ago; and so wise is he & so eager, that when so ever he cometh forth from the sheath he will not go backagain till he hath had a life. Sober ware ever, for mickle scatheshall come of it if he see the heavens and the earth for light cause @ Somewhat daunted was the bold lad; but he said: Tellme, thou bright lord, at what times I shall draw forth Board-cleaver Said Steel head: Only then when thou hast the foe before thee; then draw and be of good courage, for never shall point & edge be dulled by the eyes hot of the wicked and wizards, as whiles it befalls the common blades of torday, for a man of might hath breathed on the edges amidst much craft of spells, so that nought may master that blade, save one of its brethren fashioned by the

Steelhead praiseth Osberne

same hands, if such there be yet upon the earth, whereof Imisdoubt me. Now then thou hast the sword; but I lay this upon thee therewith, that thou be no brawler nor make bate, & that thou draw not Board/cleaver in any false quarrel, or in behalf of any tyrantor evil doer, or else shall thy luck fail thee despite the blade that lieth hidden there. But meseemeth nought shalt thou be of the kind of these wrong doers. Hnd I say of thee that thou didst well with me last night; for though thou knewest me presently, and that I was not without might, yet at first, when thou tookest me by the hand and leddest meto the fire before all the house, thou knewestmenot, & I was to thee but the ragged gangrel body whom thy grand, sire would have thrust forth into the storm again; but thou didst to me no worse than if I had been lord and earl.

berneheard these words then first he knew what praise was, and the heart glowed within him, and valiancy grew up therein, & his face was bright TO TO TO

and his eyes glistened with tears; and he spake no word aloud, but he swore to himself that he would be no worse than his friend Steelhead would have him to be.

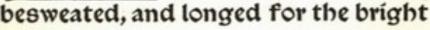
Osberne girds on the sword

it to him; and he said: Master, this is no long sword, but it is great and heavy, and meseemeth my bairn's might may never wield it. Shall I not lay it by till I become a man? That shall be seen to, fair youngling, said Steelhead. In an hour thou shalt have might enough to wield Board-cleaver, though doubtless thy might shall be eked year by year and month by month thereafter.

Chapter XIV. Steelhead takes leave

of Osberne

noon, and the sun very hot, and as they lay on the grassafter this converse the lad looked on the water; and he was





in the pool

They bathe pools of the stream after the manner of boys; and he said at last: I were fain to take to the water this hot noon, if it please thee FIt is well thought of, lad, said Steelhead, and that the more, as I must needs see thee naked if I am to strengthen thee as I am minded to do So they did off their raiment. both of them, and went into the biagest of the pools hard by; and if Steel head were a noble/looking man clad, farnobler was he to look on naked, for he was both big & well shapen, so that better might not be. Hs for Osberne, there looked but little of him when he was unclad, as is the fashion of lads to be lank, yet for his age he was full well shapen. So Steelhead came out of the water presently, & clad himself, while Osberne yet played awhile. Then Steel head called the lad to him, all naked as he was, and said: Stand thou before me, youngling, & I will give thee a gift which shall go well with Board, cleaver. #Hnd the lad stood still before him. and Steelhead laid his hands on the head of him first, and let them abide

thereawhile; then be passed his hands Steelhead over the shoulders & arms of the boy, blesses the and his legs and thighs & breast, and lad allover his body; & therewith he said: In our days and the olden time it was the wont of fathers to bless their children in this wise; but for thee, thy father is dead, and thy nighest kinsman is little/hearted & somewhat of a churl. Thus then have I done to thee to take the place of a father to thee, I who am of the warriors of while agone. And I think it will avail thee; and it is borne in upon me that before very long thou wilt need this avail, if thou art to live and do the deeds I would have thee. Now it is done, so cover thee in thy rais ment and rest awhile; and then I will depart & leave thee to the might which I have given thee, & the valiance which bath grown up in thine heart.

they lay down on the greensward and rested; and Osberne had fetched along with him cakes and cheese, and a keg of good drink, and they took their bever there in all content. But for that time Steel

Osberne handles the sword

head spakenomore of his folk and the old days, but about the fowl and fish &other wild things that haunted that clough, & of shooting in the bow and so forth. Then they arose and went to their horses. & Steelhead said to Osberne: how is it with the might of thy body, lad? Canst thou do better in wrestling of Boardicleaver? @So the youngling stretched himself, and took the sword by the hilts & shook it and waved it about, and tossed it in the air and caught it again, and said: Seest thou, master? Meseems my might is somuch eked, that I deem I could swim the stream of the Sundering flood and overcome it Quoth the hillman, laughing: Yea, and we know that that would please thee well; but let it be, my son. I bid thee: for no race of folk who have dwelt in the Dale from the beginning of the world have ever won across the Sundering flood. So now we depart for this present; but as for this way beast I ride, thy grandsire shall lose nothing and gain much by him; for I took him but to pleasure thee, & 106

Osberne Ishall send him back to Wethermelere rides home many days are past. farewell, my son! ward Ohe kissed the youngling, and rode away south across the stream and over the other side of the clough. Osberne stood beside his horse, looking after him and the way he had taken, and then mounted and rode his way homeward, somewhat downcastatfirst for the missing of this new father. But after a while, what for his new gift and his freshlygained might, and the pride & pleasure of life, he became all joyous again, as though the earth were new made for him. Chapter XV. Surly John brings a est to Wethermel E may well think that the very next time, which indeed was on the morrow. that Osbernewent to the BightoftheClovenKnoll, he went girt with Boardcleaver, and showed it to his friend; & she looked somewhat sober at the

Elfhild weepeth

sight of it, & said: I pray thee, Osberne, draw it not forth from the sheath In nowise may I draw it, said he, for I am told never to draw it till I have my foe before me; for everit will have a life betwixt the coming forth from the sheath and its going back again DI fear me, she said, that thou wilt have to draw it often, so that many a tale will be told of it, and perhaps at last the death of thee. Hand therewith she put her hands up to her face and wept. But he comforted her with kind words, till the tears were gone. Then she looked at him long and lovingly, and said at last: I know not how it is, but thou seemest to me changed & grown less like a child, as though somenew might had come to thee. Now I may not ask thee who has done this to thee, and given thee the sword, for if thou might, est thou wouldst have told me. But tell me this, hast thou all this from a friend or a foe? The said: Dost thou indeed see that I am grown mightier? Mell, it is so; and true it is that I may not tell thee who is the giver; but I may 108

The carle's nag comes home again

not glad of my gain? She smiled & said: I should be glad, & would be if I might; but somehow meseemeth that thou growest older quicker than I do, & that it is ill for me, for it will sunder us more than even now we be sundered.

ND again he had to comfort her with sweet words; and he shot

with sweet words; and he shot across to her an ouch which Ster phen had given him that morning, so soon she was herself again, and sat & told him a tale of old times; and they parted happily, and Osberne gat him home to Wethermel. But he had scarce been at home a minute or two when there came one riding to the door, a young man scarleticlad and gay, and his horse was dight with the goodliest of saddles and bridles, and the bit of silver: but for all that, both Osberne and Stephen, who was standing in the door, knew the horse for their own nag, on whom Maywearer had ridden off the yestermorn. Now the lad criesout: Is this the stead of Wethermel? Yea, said Osberne; what would st thou?

The goodman is glad

I would see the goodman, says the swain Bhe is yet afield, said Osberne, but if thou wilt come in and have the bite & the sup thou mayst abide him, for he will not be long # I may not, said the swain, for time fails me; so I will say to thee what I was to say to him, which is no long spell, to wit that Maywearer sendeth back home the horse the goodman lent him, & bids him keep the gearon him in his memor ry Therewith is he off the horse in a twinkling and out through the garth gate, & away so swiftly that they lost sight of him in a moment. Stephen laughed and said to Osberne: Waywearer is nowise debt/tough; now will ourgoodman be glad tomight. But see thou look to the nag's shoes If ever I saw silver to know it, they be shod therewith And so it was as he said. and the silver nigh an inch thick.

and they tell him the tidings, and he grows wondrous glad, & says that luck has come to Methermel at last. But thereafter they found that

Surly John comes with a stranger

horse much bettered, so that he was the bestnaginallthe Wethermelpastures. BEAR the days now till it is the beginning of winter, and thereis nought new to tellof, tillon a day when it began to dusk, and all the household were gathered in the hall, one knocked at the door, & when Stephen went thereto, who should fold low him in save Surly John, and with him a stranger, a big tall man, darkbaired and red/bearded, wide/visaged. brownieved and redicheeked, blotchi faced and insolent of bearing; he was girt with a sword, had a shield at his back and bore a spear in his hand, and was clad in a long byrny down to his knees. De spake at once in a loud voice, ere Surly John got out the word: May hardcastle be here tomight, ye folk? The goodman quaked at the look and the voice of him, and said: Yea, surely, lord, if thou wilt have it so. But Osberne turned his head over his shoulder, for his back was toward the door, and said: Meat and drink and an ingleinthehallare free to every comer to Bardcastle smites Osberne on the cheek

this house, whether he be earl or churl. hardcastle scowled on the lad, and said: Lam neither earl nor churl, but a man of mine own hand, and I take thy bidding, goodman, for this night, but as to thereafter we will look to it; but as to thy youngling, I will look to him at once and teach him a little manners. @Hndtherewith hewentup to Osberne and smote him a cheek/slap from behind. Surly John laughed, and made a mowathim, and said: holyoung wolf, slayer, feelest thou that? Now is come the end of thy mastery But neither for slap nor for gibe did Osberne flinch onewhit, or change countenance. Then Bardcastle said: Bahl is that the lad whoslew the wolves ye ran from, John? he will be a useful lad about the house. 9 John held his peace and reddened somewhat, and hardcastle said: Now showmewhere to be stow this fighting gear of mine; for meseems I shall not wantityetawhilein this meek & friend ly house @ Quoth Osberne over his shoulder: Things boded will happen, and also things unboded & hardcastle

scowledagain, but this time smotehim Stephen not, for he was busy doing off his hau, the Eater berk, which Stephen took from him trips hardpresently, along with his other armour castle and weapons, and hung them upon the pins at the other end of the hall. Then he came back and stood before hardcastle as if waiting some commandment, but the warrior said: Who is this big lubber here, and what is his name? What does the fool want? Said Stephen: I want to serve thee, noble sir, & my name is Stephen the Eater; but I can swallow most things better than hardwords & hardcastle lifted up his right foot to kick his backside, but Stephen deftly thrust out his right foot and gave the man a shove on his breast, so that he tripped him, & down went Bardcastle bundling. Be picked himself up in a mighty rage, and would have fallen on Stephen; but he saw that the Eater had a broad and big knife in his girdle, so he forbore, being now all unarmed; and Stephen said: Our floor is somewhat slippery for dancing, fair sir But therewith arose Osberne, &

table

They sit at came before the guest, and louted to him & said: Noble sir, I pray thee para don our man Stephen, for thou seest howelumsy a man be is, and he knoweth not where to bestowhis long legs; he is ever in everyone's way BAnd as he spake the smiles were all over his face, and he louted low again. Stephen staredastonishedat him & drewback, and as for Bardcastle, the wrath ran off him, and he looked on Osberne & said: Nav. thou art not so unmannerly a lad as I deemed; belike I shall yet make something out of thee.

BEREWITH the meat was borne in, and they all sat to table, and Bardcastle was well at ease; and the goodman, if he were not quite happy, yet made a shift to seem as if hewere. The guest satat the right hand of the goodman, and after he had eaten awhile he said: Goodman, thy women here have doubtless once been fair, but now they are somewhat stricken in years. hast thou in hiding somewhere, orbelikelying out in the field or at some cot, anything prettier? something with

sleek sides and roundarms and dainty H gibe at leas & feet? It would make us merrier, Surly John and belike kinder, if such there were.

he goodman turned pale, and stammered out that these were all the women at Wethermel; & John criedout: It is even as I told thee. warrior. heed it not; there be fair women up and down the Dale, and thou shalt have one or two of these with little pains, either for love or for fear Fhard castle laughed & said: Thou shalt go and fetch them for me, Surly John, & see which shall serve thee best, love or fear @ Hlllaughed thereat, for they well knew his ill temper and his cowardice. and he turned red & blue for rage. But as for Osberne, he could not help think ing of the pretty maid whose hand he had held at the Cloven Mote last winter; and he thought that if hardcastle didherany wrong, Board, cleaver might well look on the sun in her behalf.

LICTLE after Osberne turns to John and sees his knife lying on the board, a goodly one, well carven on the heft. So he says: Thy

bandles Surly Tohn's knife

Osberne whittle seems to me both good and strange, John, reach it into my hand. John did so, & the youngling takes hold of it by the back near the point with his thumb and finger, and twists it till it is like a ram's born. Then be gives it back to John and says: Thy knifeis now stranger than it was, John, but'tis not of so much use as erst, All marvelled at this feat, all save the fool Surly John, who raises a great out, cry that his knife is marred. But hardcastle, whose head is now pretty much filled with drink, cried out: hold thy peace, John; doubtless this youngling here bath craft enough to straighten thy whittle even as he has crooked and winded it. By the mass he is a handy smith, and will be of much avail to me. Osberne reached out his hand for the knife, and John gave it to him, and he took it by the point as aforetime, and, lo, in a moment it was once more straight again, so to say. Then he hands it back to John, & says: Let our man Stephen lay his hammer on the blade to morrow once or twice, and thy

knife shall be as good as ever it was @ The good-Allwondered, but hardcastlenotmuch, man sleeps whereas by this time he could not see little that night very straight out of his eyes. So he bids lead him to bed, & the goodman took him by the hand and brought him to the guest/chamber, & himself lies down in an ingle of the hall. So all lay down, and there was rest in the house the night long; save for the goodman, whosleptbutlittle,&thatwithdreams of the cutting of throats and firing of roofs. Chapter XVI. Bardcastle would seize Methermel ## BEN it was morning, & folk were afoot in the house, hardcastle lay longabed; but when the first meal was on the board, & they were gathered in hall, he came thereto, and sat down and ate without a word, and was by seeming as surly as John. But when the boards were taken up, & the women at least, though not the others I deem,

will take Methermel

hardcastle were looking that he should call for his horses and depart, he leaned back in his high/seat, and spake slowly & lazir ly: This stead of Methermel is much tomymind: it is a plenteous house and good land, & more plenteous it might be made were I to cast a dyke and a wall round about, and have in here a sort of good fellows who should do my bidding, so that we might help ourselves to what we lacked where plenty was to be had. I will think of this hereafter. but at this present, and till winter is done and spring is come, I will say no more of that. And to you folk, even to the big lubber yonder, I will say this, that ye, women and all, shall be free of meat and drink and bed if ve will but be brisk about doing my will, & serve me featly; but if not, then shall ye pack and be off, and have no worse harm of me. have ye heard, and will ye obey?

> EDE women were pale and trembled, & the goodman quaked exceedingly, while Surly John stood by grinning. Osberne smiled pleasantly but spake not. he was girt

with the sword Board/cleaver and clad Dardcasinscarlet. Hs for Stephen, he stood ber tle's title fore Bardcastle with a face seeming solemn, save that he squinted fearfully, looking all down along his long nose.

Comcame the goodman forthand knelt before the ruffler, and said: Lord, we will even do thy will: but mightest thou tell us where ye got licence and title to take all our wealth from us and make us thy thralls? The warrior laughed: It is fairly asked, goodman, and I will not spare to show theemytitle Therewith he drew forth his sword, a great and heavy blade, and castitrattling on the board before him. and said: There is my title, goodman; wilt thouaska better? @ The goodman groaned and said: Ht least, lord, I pray thee take not all I have, but leave me some little whereby to live, and thereof I will pay somewhat year by year, if the seasons be good.

Y friend, quoth hardcastle, by the title that lieth wonder I have the title that lieth yonder I have gotten thy wealth, and every jot of it might I keep if I would. But

Osberne asketh a question of Dardcastle see how kind I am to thee and thine. for have I not told you that ye shall live in this house, and eat the sweet & drink the strong & lie warm amights, so long as ye do my will Wea, said the goodman, but we must needs toil as thralls @ Great fool, said hardcastle, what matters that to thee? It is like thou shalt work no harder than erst, or no harder than may be enough to keep me as thy guest. Nay, goodman, wilt thou turn me from thy door and deny me guesting? What sayest thou to that, fiddle, bow, my sharp dear? said be, handling his sword Now the goodman creptaway, & Surly John says that he wept.

smiling and debonair as erst, and he said: fair sir, one thing I crave of thee to tell me, to wit, is there no other way out of this thraldom, for well thou wottest that no man would be a thrall might be help it? Mell, my lad, quoth the warrior smiling, for now after his talk with the goodman he was in better humour, when thou growest

older thou wilt find that saw of thine Stephen belied many wise, and that many there squints be who are not loth to be thralls. But as to what way there may be out of this thraldom, I will tell thee the way, as I was about to do with the goodman; though whereas he is but little/hearted, and there is none else fight/worthy in the house, save it were this lubber in front... Wellthou, why art thou skelly, ing, man, as if thou wouldst cast the eyes out of thine head on either side? Quoth Stephen: I was grown so afraid of thee, fair sir, that I wotted not where to look, so I thought my eyes would do me least harm if they looked down along my nose Quoth hardcastle: I begin to see how it will go with thee, great lout, that in the first days of my mastership thine hide shall pay for thy folly Stephen squinted none the less, but his whittle was yet in his belt. Now hardcastle went on speaking to Osberne, and said: Well now. I will tell thee the way out of this thraldom, as thou wilt call it; and the more to thee, bairn, because thou wilt become

The goodman must find a cham, pion

my man and wilt be bold and deft, I doubt not; therefore thou shouldst learn early the fashions of great and bold men. Hearkens ever when I offer to some man a lot that seemeth hard untohim, then I bid him, if it likes him not, to pitch me the hazelled field hard by his house, & we to go thereinto and see what point and edge may say to it; and if he slay me or hurt me so much that I must be borne off the field within the four corners, then is hequit, and bath his land again, and bath gained mickle glory of my body. Moreover if hemay not fight himself, yet will I meet any champion that he may choose to do battle with me. Now this is a good and noble custom of the bold, and bath been deemed so from time long agone. And indeed I deem pity of it that here to day the goodman may not fight nor bath found any champion to fight for him. But three days first will I give him to find such a champion... Thou wretch. said he to Stephen, why wilt thou still skellyatme? Because the champion is found, said Stephen.

HRDCHSTLE snorted and his Pardcastle beard bristled, but forth stood has choice Osberne, and he still smiling; & of three he said: Thou warrior, three things I things offer thee to choose from, and the first is that thou depart hence, thou and thy man: because thou hast not dealt with us as aguest should, but hast smitten me and threatened all of us, and brazened out thy wrong doing. This is the best way out of thy folly; what sayest thou to it? But such fury was in the ruffler's heart now, that he had no words for it, but rolled about in the high/seat snorting and blowing. Said Osberne: I see thou wilt not take this way, & that is the worse for thee. Now the next is that we hazel a field & fight therein. Wilt thou have this? & The champion roared out: Yea, that will It but in such wise that thou take sword and shield & I a bunch of birch twigs: and if I catch thee not and unbreech thee and whip thee as a grammar master his scholar, then will I lay down sword and shield for ever.

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Osberne bids him depart AID Osberne coldly: Thou seest not that I am girt with a sword, and I tell thee it is a good one. Or wilt thou take Surly John's knife this morning and do as I did with it last night? And I did it for a warning to thee, but belike thou wert drunk and noted it not.

what, for now he did remember the feat of the knife. But Osberne spake again: Lask thee, warrior, wilt thou enter the field that I shall hazel for thee? Quoth the ruffler, but in a lower voice: I cannot fight with a boy; whether I slay him or am slain I am shamed.

from the house with as little shame as a ruffler and a churl may have. But if thou wilt neither of these things, then will it befall that I shall draw my blade and fall on thee to slay thee, and make the most of it that here stands by me my man Stephen, a true and fearless carle, with his whittle bare in his hand. And this I may well

do, whereas, by thine own telling, thou art not in our house but in thine own.

Osberne bids hazel the field

HRDCHSTLE lifted up his bead, for he had hung it down awhile, & said in a hoarse voice: Bazel the field for me then, and I will go therein with thee and slav thee. That may well be, said Osberne, yet it may not be & Then he bade Stephen to go hazel the field in the flat meadows toward the river; and therewith he bethought him of his friend on the furtherside of the water, and how it might well be that he should never see her again, but lie slain on the meadow of Methermel; & he wondered if tidings of the battle would go across the water & come unto her. But amidst his musi ings the harsh voice of hardcastle reached his ears. Beturned round with a start & heard how the ruffler said to him: Let me see the sword, lad, where, with thou wilt fight me & Osberne took the sheathed blade from his girdle and handedit to hardcastle without a word. and the warrior fellat once to handling the peaceistrings; but Osberne cried

Osberne will make peace

out: Nay, warrior, meddle not with the peace/strings, for who knoweth what scathe may come of the baring of the blade within doors? @ Well, well, said hardcastle, but the blade must out presently, and what harm if it be now? Vet he took his hand from the wear pon. & laid it on the board before him. SBERNE looked about him and saw that they two were alone in the hall now, for the others had gone down to look on the hazelling. So he spake quietly and said: Marrior, is it not so, that thou hast in thine heart some foreboding of what shall befall? Bardcastle answered nought, and Osberne went on: I see that so it is, and meseems it were better for thee if this battle were unfought. Lo now, shall we not make peacein such wise that thou abide here this day in all honour holden, & in hon,

our depart to morrow morn, led out with such good gifts as shall please thee? Thus shalt thou have no shame, and everything untoward betwixt us shall be forgotten. Frardcastle shook

his head and said: Nay, lad, nay, the Bardcastale would get about, and shame would presently be on the wing towards me. Me must stand within the hazel garth against each other @ Then he spakear gain, and a somewhat grim smile was on his face: Hwhile agone thou didst threaten to slay me with the help of vonder squinting loon, but now thou standest unarmed before me, & I have thy sword under my hand. hast thou no fear of what I may do to thee, since soit is that forebodings weigh on mine heart? Nay, Jamnotafraid, said Os, berne; thou mayest be a bad man, yet not so bad as that.

OOTh it is, said hardcastle; but I say again, thou art a vali-antlad. Lo now, take thy sword again; but tell me, what armour of defence hast thou for this battle? Nought savemy shield, said Osberne; there is a rusty steel hood stands you, der on the wall, but no byrny have we in the house Said hardcastle: Well, I may do so much as this for thee, I will leave all my defences here and go

tle's foreboding of hazelled

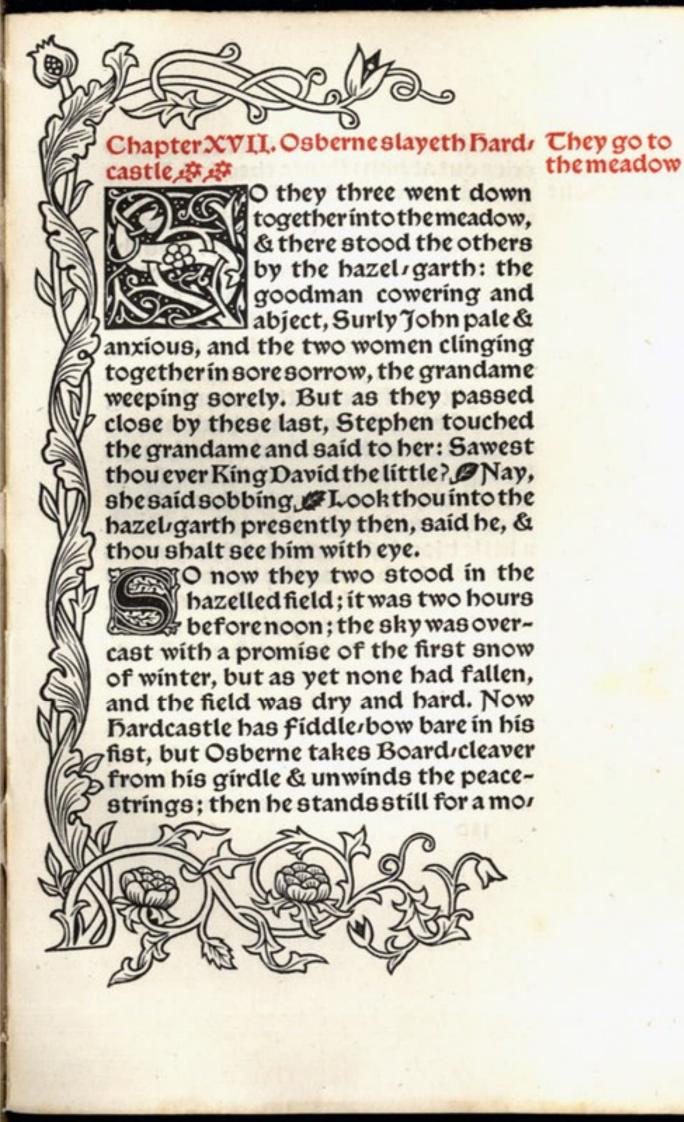
The field is down to the hazels with nought but my sword in my fist, and thou shalt have the shield: but I warn thee that

fiddle, bow is a good blade.

HID Osberne, and smiled: Well I wot that, if thou get in but one downright stroke on me, little shallmy shield avail meagainst fiddle bow. Yet I take thine offer and thank thee for it. But this forthinketh me. that if thou live out this day thou wilt still betake thee to the same insolency and greediness & wrong/doing as thou hast shown yesterday & this morning.

HRDCHSTLE laughed rough ly and said: Well, lad, I deem thou art right; wherefore slay me hardily if thou mayest, and rid the world of me. Yet hearken, of all my deeds I have no shame at all: though folk say some of them were ugly...let it be.

BEREWITh came Stephen into the hall, and he did them to wit that the hazels were pitched, and now he squinted no more.



Boardcleaver's first stroke ment & looks toward his foeman, who cries out at him: haste thee, lad, I were fain done with it @ Then Osberne draws forth the blade, and it made a gleam of white in the grey day, & as the folk say who stood thereby, as Board, cleaver came forth bare there came a great humming soundall about. Then Osberne gets his shield on his arm, and cries out: Now thou warrior! and straightway Bardcastle comes leaping toward him; & Osberne abode him as he came on with uplifted sword, leapt lightly to one side, and thrust forth Board/cleaverand touched his side, so that all could see the blade had drunk a little blood. fiercely and fast turned Bardcastle about on the lad, but there, with was be within the ruffler's stroke, and Board/cleaver's point was steady before Osberne's breast & met Bardcastle's side, and made a great wound with the point, and the warrior staggered back, and his sword/point was lowered Then cried out Osberne: What I thou wouldst unbreech me, wouldst thou? but now art thou un-

breeched of fortherewith Boardicleavi Bardcastle er swept round back/handed and came is killed back as swift as lightning, & the edge clave all the right flank and buttock of him, so that the blood ran freely; and then as hardcastle, still staggering. hove up his sword wildly, Osberne put the slant stroke aside with his shield, and thrust forth Board/cleaver right at his breast, & the point went in, and the whole blade, as there were nought but dough before it, & hardcastle, nigh rent in two, fell aback off the sword.

SBERNE stood still awhile looking on him, but Stephen ran up & knelt beside him, and felt his wrist and laid his hand on the breast, and then turned and looked up at Osberne, who knelt down beside him also, and wiped the blood off Boardcleaver with a lap of the dead man's coat. Then he stood up and thrust the blade back into the sheath, and wound the peace strings about it all. Then came the word into his mouth, and he sang:

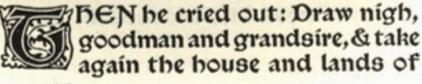
k 2

Osberne sings

To the hazelled field Where the fey man fell

The grey blade grew glad
In the hands of a lad,
Hnd the tall man and stark
Leapt into the dark.
for the cleaver of war boards came
forth from his door
Hnd guided the hand of the lacking in lore.

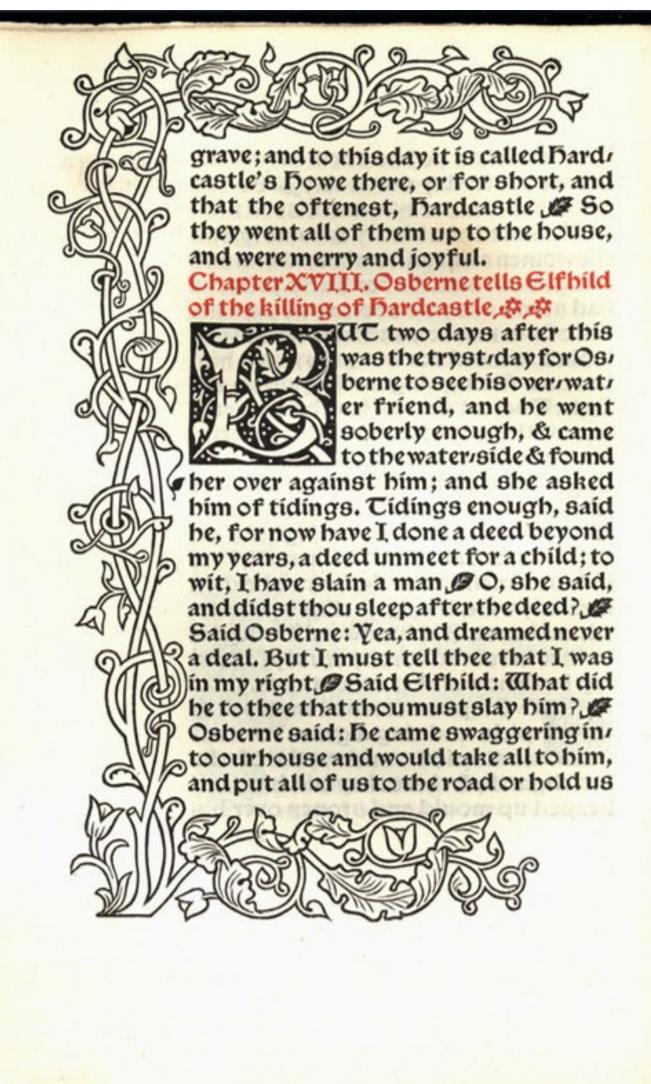
But now is the blade
In the dark sheath laid,
And the peace/strings lull
his heart o'erfull.
Up dale and down
The hall/roofs brown
hang over the peace
Of the year's increase.
No fear rendeth midnight, and dieth the day
With no foe save the winter that wear,
eth away.



Methermel as ye had them aforetime before yesterday was a day \$50 the grave for goodman came to him and kissed him, and thanked him kindly & humbly, and the women came and embraced him and hungabout him. Hs for Surly John, he had slunk away so soon as he saw the fall of his master, and now when they looked around for him, they saw him but as a fleck going swiftly down the Dale. Thereat they all laughed together, and the laughter eased their hearts, so that they felt free and happy.

om, said Stephen, what shall we do with this carcass, that was so fierce & fell this morning? Said Osberne: We shall lay him in earth here in his raiment as he fell, since he died in manly wise, though belike he has lived as a beast. But his sword I will give to thee in reward for thy trusty following both now and at other times.

pick, and dug a grave for that champion amidwards of the hazelgarth, & there they laid him, and heaped up mould and stones over his



in thraldom She said: But tell me, Elfhild is howdidstthouslayhim? Washedrunk downcast orasteep? Nay, said he; Iwascham, pion for my grandsire, and the robber had a sword in his fist, and I another. and we fought, and I overcame him @ Said the maiden: But was be mannikin or a dastard, or unskilled in weapons? Spake Osberne, reddening: he was a stark carle, a bold man, and was said to be of all prowess,

he said nothing a while, but stood mbat is this, playmate? I looked to have much praise from thee for my deed. Dost thou know that this man was as the pest to all the country side, & that I have freed men of peace from a curse? Be not wrath with me, Osberne, she said, indeed I am somewhat downcast; for I see that now thou wilt beno playmate forme, but will be aman

before thy time, & will be looking towards such things as men desire; and that tall maidens come to womanhood

will be for thee, not quaint rags of chile

She will not dance for him

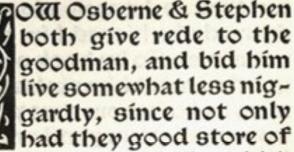
he, why wilt thou run to meet trouble half way? Am I worser to thee than I was last time? P Nay, she said, and in deed I deem thee glorious, & it is kind and kind of thee to come to me ever, &

not to miss one of our trysts.

Com thou art dear, said Osberne; and wilt thou do something for my disport? wilt thou pipe thy sheep to thee? May, said she, I will not: I will not skip like an antic, & show thee my poor little spindle legs. If I were a woman grown I should scarce show so much as the ankle of my foot. Besides, thou laughest at my hopping and jumping amongst those foolish woolly beasts, and I would not have thee laugh at me @ Elfhild, my dear, said he, thou art wrong. When I have laughed it was never in mockery of thee, but for pleasure of thy pretty ways and the daintiness of thy dancing, which is like to the linden leaves on a fresh summer morning But how am I to know that? she said. Well, at any rate ask me not to dance torday. But I will sit down and tell thee a very sweet

taleofoldtimes, which thou has tnever Good erst heard. It is about the sea & ships, store at and of a sear wife coming into the dwell Methermel lings of men Quoth Osberne, I were fain to look on the sea and to sail it, Yea, said Elfhild, but thou wilt take me with thee, wilt thou not? 60, yea, said Osberne Hnd they both forgat the Sundering flood, and how they should never meet, as they sat each side of the fearful water, and the tale and sweet speech sped to and fro betwixt them. So a fair ending had that day of tryst,

Chapter XIX. The winter passes, and Elfhild tells of the death of her kins-



victual and clothes and the like, which had been hoarded a long time, but also the gifts of Maywearer had stood them in goodstead; and furthermore,





The goodman gets him hired men the goodman was much bettered by the spoil of Bardcastle. for he had left much wealth behind him, and chiefly in silverandgold; and all that he had left save his weapons, had Osberne given to his grandsire. So the goodman heed, ed their words & let himself be talked over, and while winter was yet young, and before there was any snow to hinder, he rode with Osberne down the Dale. & looked into many of the steads, and amongst others, where dwelt the damsel who had been paired with Osberneon the day of the mid winter Cloven Mote. And he thought her fair and sweet. & she received him joyfully and kissed him: but he was scarce so ready for that as he was aforetime, for he deemed she kissed him as a child and not a man. So by hook or by crook the goodman got him six hired folk; three men, two of whom were young, & three women, all young and one comely, one ill favoured, and the other betwixt and between. It must be said, by the way, that if he had abided the spring for getting these new folk he would scarce

Gertrude woos Osberne

have hired them, for the repute of Wer The damsel thermel for scant housekeeping had gone wide about; but when folk heard that Master Nicholas was hiring folk from mid winter onwards, they were willing enough to come, whereas they deemedhewouldbechanginghismind & becoming open/handed. So Nicholas rides back with his catch, for he had brought nags to horse them, & henceforth is good house kept at Wethermel, as good as anywhere in the Dale.

GHIN fared Osberne to the mid winter Cloven Mote, and again was be mated to the aboversaid damsel, who hight Gertrude; and for sooth be deemed that this time she kissed him and caressed him not so wholly as a mere boy, though of such things ye may well deem he knew little. for she seemed to find it hard when they kissed, as paired folk are bound to do, to let her lips leave his, & when their hands parted at the end of the Mote she gave a great sigh, and put bercheek toward him for a parting kiss, which forsooth he gave her somewhat

Elfhild's kinswomen at the Mote unheedfully; for he was looking hard to, ward the other shore to see if he could make out the shape of Elfhildamongst the women there, as he had done when, ever he gat a chance of it all day long, but had failed wholly therein.

DREE days afterwards he kept tryst with Elfhild, and asked her if she had been at the Mote, and she told him No; that her aunts went every time, but always left her behind. Then she said smiling: And this time they have come back full of thy praises, for the tale of thee, and the slaving of the robber, has come over to our side; and one of them, the youngest, had thee shown to her by one of the folk. & she saith that thou art the fairest lad that ever was seen; and therein she is not far wrong. Be laughed and reddened, and told for tidings how he had fared at the Mote, and Elfhild belike was not best pleased to hear of the fair damsel who was so fond of kissing; but in all honesty she rejoiced when Osberne told how hard he had looked for her on the other side of the water. So they made the most of their short They meet day, as indeed they had need to do, for in the through the winter, when the snowwas spring, time on the earth and the grass grew not, the sheep were all shut up in the folds and the cotes, and there was no shepherding toward; so that Elfhild was hard put to it for some pretence for getting away from the house, & their trysts had to be further between than they had been; and not seldom, moreover. Elfhild failed at the trysting-

place, and Osberne had to go sorrowfully away, though well he wotted it

was by no fault of his playmate. Owore the winter tidingless, and spring came again, and again the two met oftener; and great feast they made the first day, when Elfhild came to the ness with her head and her loins wreathed with the winter's wolfs, bane. It was a warm and very clear day of february, and Elfhild of her own will piped to her sheep and danced amongst them; and Osberne looked on bereagerly, and be deemed that she had

grown bigger and sleeker and fairer;

Elfhild's kinswoman dies

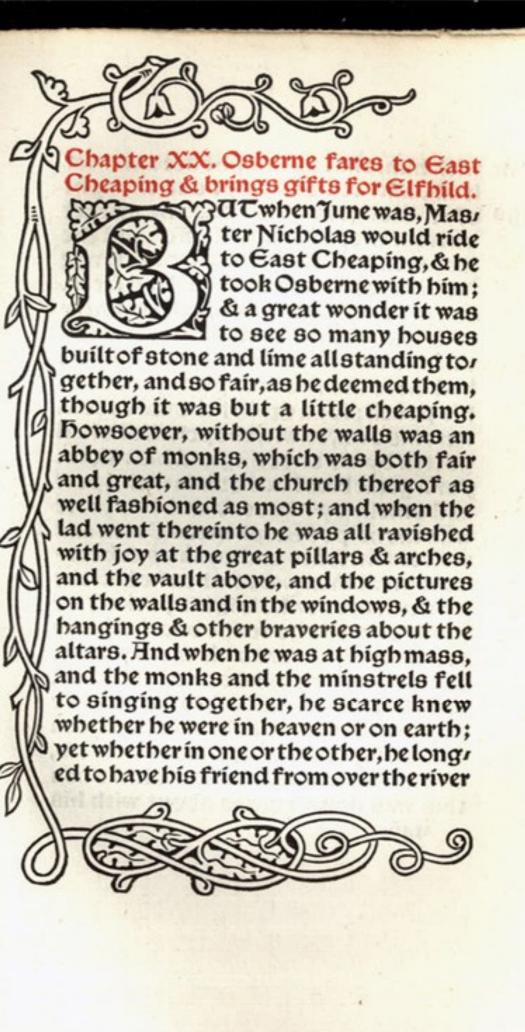
and her feet and legs, for still shewent barefoot, since they had not the summer tan on them, looked so daintywhite to him that sore he longed to stroke them and kiss them. And this, belike, was the beginning to him of the longing of a young man, which afterwards was so sore on him, to be with his friend and embrace her and caress her.

O they met often that springtide, and oftener as the weather waxed warmer. And nought worth telling befell to Osberne that while save these meetings. Butatlast, when May was yet young, Osberne kept tryst thrice and Elfhild came not, and the fourth time she came and had tidings, to wit, that one of her kinswomen had died of sickness. Said she: And it was the one who was least kind to me, and made most occasion for chastising me. Well, she is gone; and often she was kind to me, and before I saw thee I loved her somewhat. But now things will go better, because the other aunt, who was kinder than the dead

one, bath taken also into the house Osberne's that old woman whereof I told thee, love growwho hath taught me lore and manyan, eth cient tales: and though she be old and wrinkled, she is kind & loves me: and she is on our side, and I have told her about thee: and she in turn told me strange things and unked, which I will not & dare not tell again to thee. Where forenowlet us be glad together @Said Osborne: Yea, we will try to be glad; but see thou, I want more than this now. I want to come across to thee. & tell thee things which I cannot shout across this accursed flood; and I want to take thee by the hand and put my arms about thee and kiss thee. Dost thou not wish the like by me? O. yea, said the maiden reddening, most soothly do I. But hearken, Osberne: the carline saveth that all this thou shalt do to me, and that we shall meet body to body one day. Dost thou trow in this? @ Nay, how can I tell, said he somewhat surlily, when thou hast told mesolittleofthetale, Wall, shesaid, but I may not tell more; sonow, I pray,

They comfort each other let us be glad with what we have got of meeting oftener, and a life better and merrier for me. Bethink thee, my dear, that if I live easier and have not to toil so much, and catch fewer stripes, and have better meat & more, I shall grow sleeker and daintier, yea and bigger, so that I shall look older & more woman, like sooner And she wept a little therewith; so he repented his surliness and set to comfort her, till she laughed & he also, and they were merrier together.

converse sweet and happy, and true it was that Elfhild grew fairer and sleeker week by week; and she was better clad now, and well shod, & wore her ouches and necklaces open, ly, though she said she had not shown all to the carline, Not all of thine I mean. But the Dwarf necklace, the glorious one, I have shown her, & she saith that it is such a wonder that it forebodeth my becoming a Queen; and that will be well, as thou shalt be a great man thus well, as thou shalt be a great man thus will be well, as thou shalt be a great man the consideration.



buys fairings

Osberne with him, that she might see and hear it all, and tell him what she thought of it. Mondrous also was the market wherein they did their chaffer, and the chapmen in their fine coats of strange fashion to him and their outland faces, and the carts and wains of the country folk and their big sleek horses. And when it was all done he found that he had more than a silver penny or two in his pouch; for a deal of the wares sold were his own, to wit, the peltries he had gotten by his shooting and his valour. for a great bear had he slain with spear and shield by himself, and two more with the help of Stephen the Eater, and wolves and foxes and ermines & beavers a great many. But when he had the moneyit burnt a hole in his pocket; for he must needs go to the booths & buy for Elfhild, as far as his money went, such things as he deemed he could shoot across the flood to her, as fair windowed shoon, & broidered hosen and dainty smocks, & silken kerchiefs, and a chaplet for her head. And when this was done, he was about with his

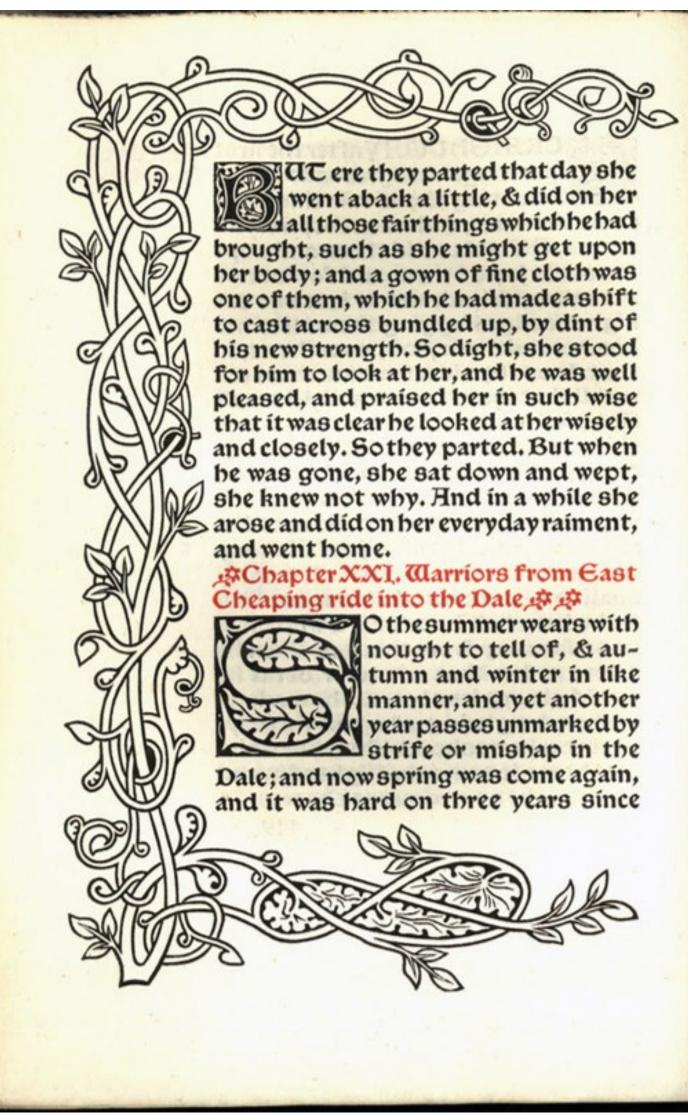
grandsire in the street, and there came he stares at down from the Castle a company of the women riders, all in jack and sallet and long spears, & two knights in white armour all gleaming in the sun, and the banner of the good town with them. Then his heart rose so high at the sight, and he yearned so for deeds of fame, that he smote his hands together and called good luck on them, and some of them turned about & laughed to each other, and praised the goodly boy, and knew not that be had slain a stouter man than e'eraone of them. Withalhis eyes might be no long while off the gay clad young women; for it was holy day, and they dressed out in their best; and he stared sodownrightly on them that his grand, sirerebukedhimaloud. And that heard some of the women, and they who were fair amongst them laughed & praised him, for they deemed him right welcome to look on all he might see of them, so fair a boy as he was: & one of them, a goodly woman of some thirty summers, came up to him and bade the old carle hold his peace and not scold

12

Osberne's gifts at the boy; for, said she, the lad is so well-liking that he hath good right already to deal with any woman as he will; and when he groweth older by a half score years, Godiaimercy, which of us shall be able to say him nay! Would I were younger by that tale of years, that Imight be able presently to follow him allover the world . And therewith she kissed him betwixt the eyes and went her ways. But as before, he was but half pleased to be so kissed, as a mere child. Shortly to say, they made great feast there for the joy of all these things, & rode back to the Dale in a day or two, and came safe & sound to Wethermel.

two children Osberne bore down all those fair things; & he found Elfhild on the ness, and she looking shy and dear, for he had told her that he was going to the cheaping. And now was her hair no longer spread abroad, but bound up close to her head, and she was clad in a seemly gown of homespun, with black hosen and skin shoes well laced.

CRAIGHT WAY after the first he tells of greetings was great ado about his journey shooting those fair things across the water; and when they were all across, Elfhild undid them, and wept for sheer joy of them and for love of her valiant friend, and at last she sat nigh the edge hugging them all to her bosom, and said: Now, sweetheart, is the tale on thy side, for thou must tell me all that thou hast seen and done Sohefellto, nought loth, & told every thing at large, and the little maiden's eyes sparkled and her face glowed; but when he had told last of all about the women & of her who had kissed him, she said: Hh, all that is just what my carline saith of thee, that all women shall love thee; and that is most like, and what shall I do then, I who shall be so far away from thee? F Then he swore to her that whatever betid he would always love her, & she made as if she were gladdened again thereby; but in her heart she could not but deem that he made somewhat light of it, and was nought so anxious as she was.



those twain had first met, & Osberne Riders was sixteen years old and Elfhild but come into a month and a half less, and still they the Dale met happily as aforetime. Wethermel throve in all wise this while, and there was deep peace on the Eastern Dale, & never had the edges of Boardicleaver looked on the light of day since the fall of Bardcastle.

Tiders into the Dale, friends, though they rode alluarmed, to wit, the meniatiarms of East Cheaping, even such as Osberne had seen ride ing down from the Castle the last time of his going thither; & the errand they came on was this, that war and strife were at hand for the good town, for the Baron of Deepdale had sent the Porte his challenge for some matter of truage, wherein the town deemed it had a clearright, and seeing that it was nought feeble, it had a settled mind to fight it out. Wherefore it had sent a knight of its service and a company of meniatiarms to see what help its friends of the Dale would give it at the They seek East Dalers

pinch: for it was well known that the belp of the dalesmen were stalwart carles if need were, both arfoot and on horseback, though they were no stirrers up of strife.

the men into the Dale, & the very first stead they came to was Wethermel, for it lay first on their road. And now was Wethermela wellmanned stead, for besides Stephen the Eater, there were twelve carles de, fensible dwelling there, whereof five were sons of men of estate.

o when the said meniatiarms rode into the garth of a bright May evening, and they all glittering like somany beaps of sunlitice, all folk came out a doors, and Osberne stood before them all, clad in scarlet raiment, for Nicholas the goodman hung back somewhat, as was his wont when he deemed he saw peril at hand. Then Osberne bailed the newcomers, and asked no questions of them, and made no words save to welcome them and bid them in. And they got off their

horses & entered the house, one score The Knight and five all told; & there they unarmed talks with them, and all service was done them. Osberne and then meat and drink were set on the board and all folk fared to supper. and it was soon seen that both sides were friendly and sweet one with the other. And Osberne set the Knight who was their captain at his right hand, and they talked merrily together. But when supper was done the Knight spake unto Osberne and Nicholas and said: Sirs, is it free for me to tell out our errand into the Dale? @ Osberne answered: We should not have asked it, fair sir, if ve had not offered to tell it, but would rather have prayed you to drink a cup or two; but so it is that we be eager to hear your tale, whereas we see that ye are of our friends of East Cheaping Then the Knight began, and told them of their quarrel from point to point, & the right they deem, ed they had therein. And from time to time Osberne put in a question when he would have the matter made clearer to him, & the Knight deemed his ques,

Osberne questions him

tions handy and wise; and at last he said: Now so it is, neighbours, that we ask help of you; and the help we need is not so much of money or beasts or weapons as of the bodies and souls of stark & stout hearted men. What say ye, who be here, have ye will to ward your cheaping, and the place where we have done good to each other, or will ye let all go down the wind as for you?

HIR sir, said Osberne, we will first ask you one question: Ye bid us to ride to battle with

bid us to ride to battle with you in your quarrel; but do ye bid and command us this service as of right, or do ye crave our help as neighbours, and because there is love and dealings betwixt us? And this Lask because we dalesmen deem that we be free men, owning no service to any lord, or earl, or king.

service of you of right or by custom, but crave your help as bold & free neighbours who for love's sake may be fain of helping friends in

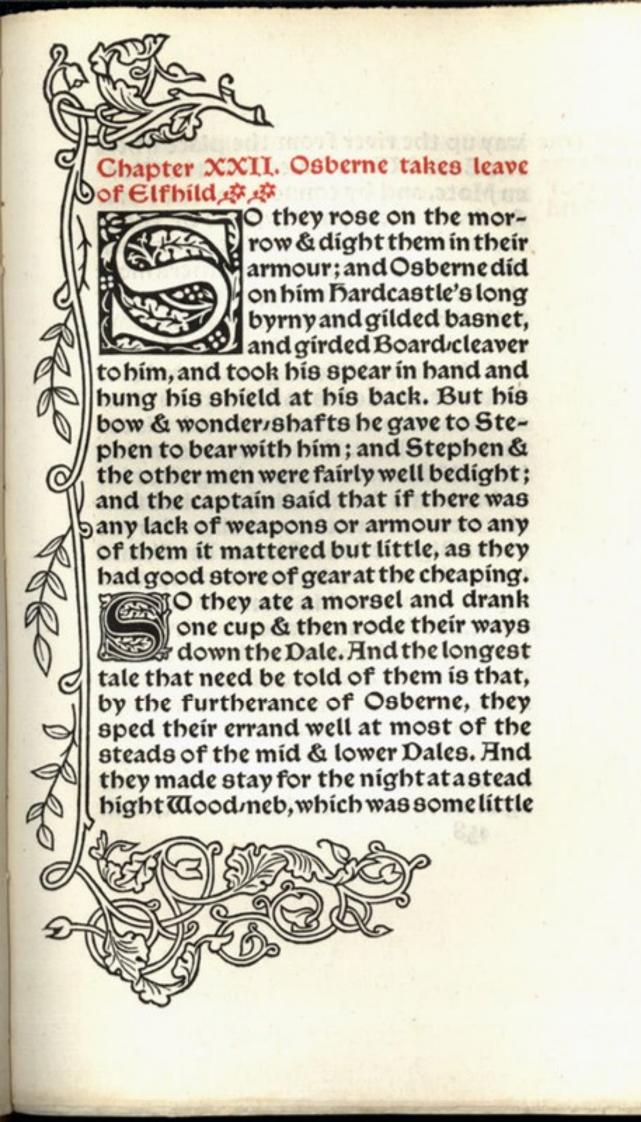
need.

DAKE Osberne: Then there is The lads

no more to be said but this, that would all there is one who will ride with ride afield you, &that is my own self. And though I be but a lad I have a stroke of work in me, as some hereby can witness: & if thou wilt, I will ride down the Dale with you and give you my furtherance with the goodmen there. But as for these good fellows: Which of you will ride with this Knight against the good town's foemen and ours? They all cried aye to this & rose up and shouted. But Osberne said: Well, lads, but some one must be left behind to look to the goodman and the women, and busband field and fold. I will take with me but six and Stephen the Eater, my man Hnd he named them one after the other. Tho were joyous now save the Knight and his meniatiarms, and they all drank a cup to the young mas, ter; but sooth to say, some of them wondered how so young a lad would bear him in the fight. But others said: Letrarbe, no man so well beloved as this shall be a dastard.

Stephen the Eater tells tales

o merry they were in the hall & drank a bout, but not for long, whereas the captain would not have his men so drunk that they might not ride fast and far on the morrow. So the voidee cup was drunk, and Osberne led the Knight to his bed & gave him goodnight. But ere he was as leep came Stephen to his bedside & asked was he fain of a tale; and the Knight yearsaid it; so Stephen told much about the Dale and its folk, and about the Dwarfs and the Land wights. Hnd at last he fell to talk about his master, the young one, and told much of him and his valiancy and kindness and prowess; and he told at length all the tale how hardcastle had sped at his hands. And the captain marvelled & said: I am in luck to see this lad and be his fellow then; for such marvels come not to hand more than once or twice in a ten score years, and this is one of them.



Osberne will take leave of Elfhild

way up the river from the place where the East & West Dales held the Cloven Mote, and by consequence not over far from the trysting/place of those twain. Ht the said house that even they were of one mind to gather a mote there the next morning, and they sent folk that same night to bear the wararrow to the steads above and below. and all seemed like to gowell; and ever Osberne spake his mind without fear or favour to the boldest and wisest that were there. But as he was laying himself down to sleep a pang shot into his heart, for he called to mind that the morrow was the very day of tryst at the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, and longer it was ere he got to sleep that night than was his wont. But when day came he was awake and few were stirring. So he arose and clad him in his war gear, & went out of the house and out of the garth when it was not yet sunrise, and came down to the river and went up it till he and the sunbeams came together to his place over against the ness, and there he abided.

Buthehad been there a scanthalf hour Elfhild erehesawElfhildcominguptheslope, speaketh and she clad in all that fair weed behad given her, wherein this time of spring and early summer she mostly came to the trysting place, & about her shoulders was a garland of white May blossom. And when she saw him in his shifting grey hauberk and gleaming helm, & Board/cleaver girt to his side and the spear in his hand, she stretchedout her hands to him and cried out: Oif thou mightest but be here & thine arms about mel for now I see that some evil hath befallen, and that thou art are raved to go away from out of the Dale. And O thy war coat and thine helm! thou art going into peril of death, and thou so young! But I had an inkling hereof, for there were two carles in our houselastnight, & they said that there were weaponed men riding amidst the East Dalers. Tell me, what is it? Will ve fight in the Dale or go far from it? and then how long dost thou look to be away? Fe spake, and his face was writhen with the coming tears, so sore

comfort ber

he would his heart was stung by her sorrow: It is indeed true that I am come to bid thee farewell for awhile, and this is the manner of it # Hnd therewith he told her all as it was, and said withal: Now I can donought save to bid thee gather thy valiance to thee and not to wound my heart with the wildness of thy grief. And look thou, my dear; e'en now thou wert saying thy yearning that mine arms were round about thy body. Now are we no longer altogether children, and I will tell thee that it is many a day since I have longed for this; and now I know that thou longest that our bodies might meet. Belike thou wilt deem me hard and self/seeking if I tell thee that there is more joy in me for the gain of that knowledge than there is sorrow in my heart for thy pain Nay, nay, she said, but for that I deem thee the dearer & the dearer @ See then, sweet, heart, said he, how might it ever come about that we might meet bodily if I abode ever at Wethermel and in the Dale in peace & quietness, while thou dwelt still with thy carlines on the o-

ther side of this fierce stream? Must Elfhild I not take chance hap and war by the craves a hand and follow where they lead, that fairing I may learn the wideness of the world. and compass earth and sea till I have gone about the Sundering flood and found thy little body somewhere in the said wide world? And maybe this is the beginning thereof.

was the maiden a little comforted, and she said, smiling as well as she might: And belike thou art for the cheaping again? Dost thou remember what a joy it was to thee to bring me those things & shoot and cast them over the water unto me? Nowthis time when thou comest back into the Dale I will ask thee to bring me one thing more, and then I shall be satisfied.

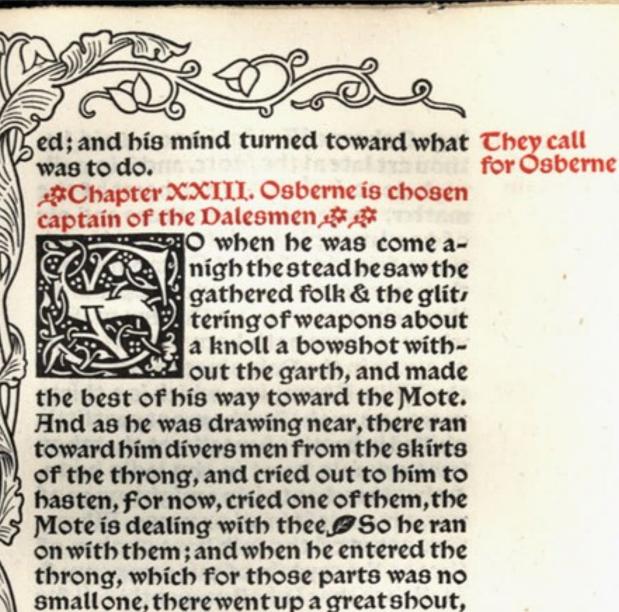
EH, sweetheart, and what shall that be? Hnd sooth to say it went against the grain with him that at the very moment of their parting she should crave something, like a very child, for a fairing. But she said: O my dear, and what should it be but

m

sounds

The horn thou thyself? @ And therewith she could refrain her passion no longer, but brake out asweeping sorely again, so that here yes could no longer behold him. But she heard many caressing words come across the water, & many farewells and words of grief, and yet she could not master her tears so that she could see him clearly, neither could she speak one word in answer. But at last she looked up and saw that he was gone from before her, and dimly she sawhim yet a little way gone down the water, & he turned toward her & raised his hand & waved it to her. And nought else she saw of him for that time save the gleam of his scarlet surcoat and a flash of his helm in the May sunlight. FOR Osberne, sick at heart at first he was, and he strode hurrying along if that might ease

him a little, and after a while he took some deal of courage, but still hastened on leaving the water/side. Then in a while himseemed to hear the voice of a great horn afar off, and he called to mind that the Mote had been summon,



and they shoved him along up to the foot of the knoll, on the top whereof stood three of the best men of estate, and the Lawman of the Dale, and the captain of the men of East Cheaping. These called him to come amongst them, & then the Lawman fell to speak

bave him captain

They will ing: Osberne Mulfgrimson, said he, thou art late at the Mote, and it is well, nigh done, but this is the heart of the matter, that we have ten score and six of good men pledged them to ride with these friends of East Cheaping; but they have craved to have a captain to them chosen from us Dalesmen. But whereas there bath been but little war or strife in the Dale since the riding of the White Champion, which is a thirty years ago, we beforthe most part little skilled in battle; & weall wot that thou hast a man's heart in thy lad's body, & that thou hast slain a mighty man of war, a man deft in all prowess. Where, fore some of the folk have spoken of thee to the captain of our company; & Itell thee that I shall presently call for the word of the whole Mote, & if they yearsayit, then must thouneeds go as captain of these, will thou nill thou.

SBERNE was as red as fire in the face by then the Lawman was done, and he said: Master, I pray thee consider my youth, & how I have had no schooling herein, and

know nought of ordering men or ar- Osberne raying a battle. All this is nought like doubts defending life and livelihood against a robber when there was none to serve at a pinch, and using one's mother wit in dealing with it. The captain of the East Cheapers smiled upon him kind, ly and said: My son, he who can use his mother wit to any purpose when the edges be aloft bath learned the more part of battle/craft. Withal it is but a few hours agone that I saw thee hand, ling the men of thine household like to a ripe man. fear not, my son, but that thou shalt do well enough; and moreover I promise that I will learn thee the craft all I may. And know that if thou deny this, then shalt thou take the heart out of these good fellows, who be eager enough to help the good town and be no mannikins, I warrant them. Nay, say it not, my lad, nay/say it not.

Woll was Osberne's heart thump, ing against his ribs, what for sudden wonder, what for the hope of renown that flashed upon him as a sudden flame of strange light. But

The Lawman speaks withalhethought in himself, & that all suddenly also: If the Sundering flood is to be encompassed here is indeed the beginning of it, if this good Knight shall be my friend & shall learn me the craft of war, and thereby I become a man of might, to be desired & waged by them who have not either the craft or the courage to fight for themselves face to face with their foemen.

to the Lawman & said: Master, it is enough; if the Mote of the neighbours will have me captain I may not nay say it: & may my luck be enough to overcome my childish years; and if not, may I lie on the field & not come back again to hear the mothers & maids curse me for having cast away the lives of their sons and their dears.

he had smiled on Osberne and laidhishandon the lad's should der: Men of the East Dale, ye be met together to see if ye can in any wise help our friends and neighbours of East Cheaping, and ye have told off certain 166

men to go in arms for their avail, and Osberne is will have a captain over them. Now it chosen bathbeen said to me that he who seems likeliest for the said captain is the young man Osberne Mulfgrimson of Methermel, & if this be so, let me hear your voices saying Yea. But even then there will be time for any man of you to name another, if it seem good to him, and that name will be also put to the Mote, and a dozen others if such there be. Now first, what say ye to Osberne Mulfgrimson?

TRAIGHT WHY arose a great cheer and the clashing of weapons, and wellinigh every man as it seemed cried out Yea. But when the noise and cry was abated, the Lawi man badeany man who would put forth another name @ No man spake for a little, till at last Surly John pushes forth to the front & says: I name Erling Thomasson, a good man and true! Brake forth then great laughter & whooping, for the said Erling was a manifestniggard, adastard who sweat, ed in his bed when the mouse squeaked

They swear fealty to him in the wall amight time. But one man sang out: Yea, Lawman, and I name Surly John & Chereat was there fresh laughter, and men shoved John to and frotill they had hustled him out to the skirts of the throng, & there bid him

go as wolf bunting.

berne by the hand & leads him to the edge of the knoll, & stands there and says: Men of the Dale, ye would go to the war; ye would take a captain to you; ye would have Osberne Mulfgrimson for your captain. All this ye have done uncompelled, of your own will; therefore take not the rue if it turn not out so well as ye looked for. But now I bid all them that be going this journey to lift up their right hands & swear to be leal & true to your captain, Osberne Mulfgrimson, in all things, for life or for death.

good will: thereupon Osberne spake & said, after he had had aword with the Knight, Sir Medard, apart: All ye my men, I have but this to

say to you: I hold you trusty and vali- Osberne ant, and men unlike to fight soft. But speaks to this I know of you, as of all other of us them Dalesmen, that ye are most wont to go eachafterhis own will, & it is wellnigh enough to put a man off from doing a thing if another man say to him, Do it. Nowthis manner ye must change, since ye are become meniatiarms, & if I bid you go to the right or the left, ye need think of nought but which is the right hand and which is the left; though for sooth I wot well that some of you be so perverse that even that debate may lead you into trouble and contention. Now look to it that ve may not all be captains, and they that try it, so long as I be over you, are like to wend into wild weather. Nowstout hearts, & my friends, it is a little past high noon: & we shall abide here no longer than tomorrow morn, & at day break we shall beonourway to East Cheaping, where, forethat time have ye got to see to your weapons and array, and to say farewell, such of you as be not too far off, to your kindred and wives & sweethearts.

breaks up

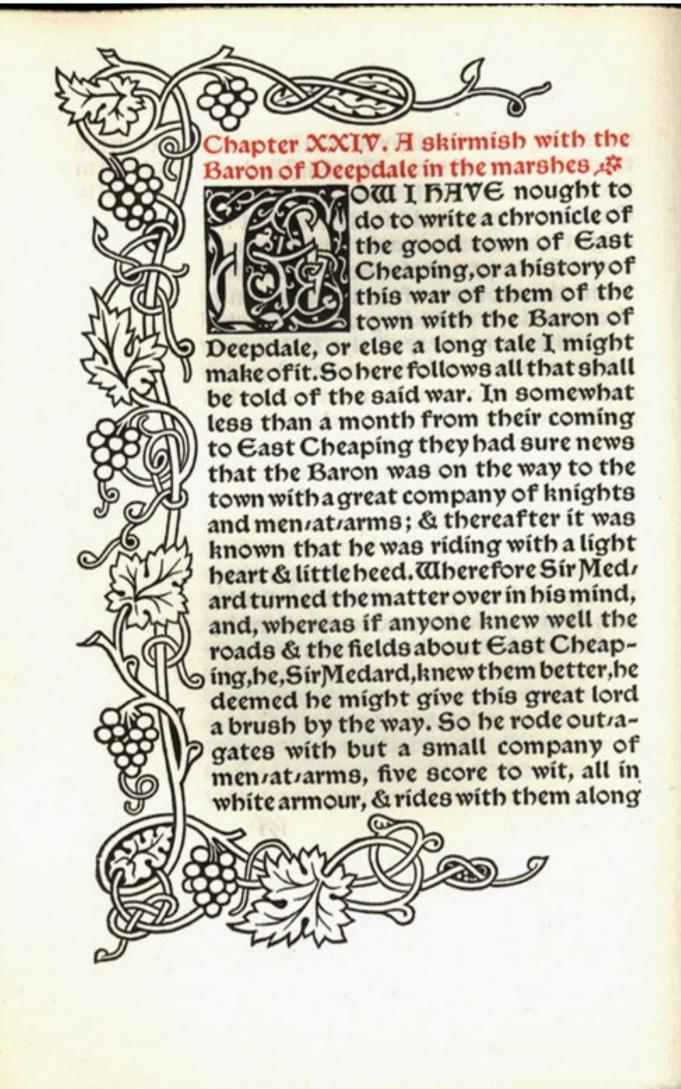
The Mote And now let all we doour best when we come among the edges, so that hereafter one man may say to another: Thou artas valiantas the Dalesmen when they fought in the war of East Cheaping Then all men gave a great shout, and were wellnigh weepingripe for high heart and for love of him, though a minute before their faces were all agrin, so wise and valiant and kind they deemed his words and the manner of his speaking.

and the men were busy arraying them for departure: & as for Osberne, he had his hands full of work, in giving and taking commandments, & in learning from Sir Medard the begin, nings of the lore of battle, so that what hopes he had of making his way to the trysting/placeoncemore were speedily sweptaside. Hnd the next morning ber times they set out together, the Dales, men & the East Cheapers, in all good fellowship, and in two days' time came to East Cheaping; and there were the Dalesmen welcomed dearly, and they were lodged full well by the crafts, mas, Osberne is ters of the good town. But Sir Medard guested in took Osberne with him up into the Castle and guested him there, that he might the closer teach him his new craft, & an apt scholar he found. Also from the morrow after their coming, the captain, by bidding of the Porte, furnished and arrayed the Dalesmen

with weapons, as long spears & good swords and bows and arrows, & jacks and sallets and shields, and they went out into the mead under the Castle to be better assured thereby, and fell to learning how best to handle their wear pons. And both their captains & they themselves deemed it best that they should fight arfoot; for though they were good horsemen after their fashion, they would have to learn all in the

craft of fighting a/horseback.

the Castle



the causeway. But early in the night, The causeere he set out, he had bidden a twelve way over score footmen make their way quietly in knots of five & ten & thereabout to acertain placefifteen miles as the high, way led from East Cheaping, where the said causeway, craftily made, went high over a marish place much beset with willow and alder, an evil place for thegoing of heavily laded horses. But of these same foot men, some half had bows, and the rest spears and swords; all the Dalesmen went with these, and Osberne was the captain of the whole company, but with him was an old grey, beard, a sergeant tried in many wars,

and a guileful man therein, and to him and Osberne Sir Medard showed what

o now the Baron and his came riding along the causeway, ten bundreds of men in all, lightly and in merry fashion, for they had said that they would go knock at the door of East Cheaping and see what the carles were about there; and it was hard on noon & And first came rid-

should be done.

the marsh

lurkers

The marsh, ing an hundred or so of tall men well armed in white armour, their basnets new tinned; and they came to a certain place where on either side was abundance of thick alder bush & the ground soft between, and there was the cause, way wider by a spear length than its wont for some two score yards. Well, this hundred passed by on their way, but when they were clean out of sight, and the next company not yet come. up rise a half dozen of men from out the alders on either side, and come on to the causeway: they are clad in home, spun coats and boods, though if any had looked closely he had seen hauberks and steel hoods under the cloth. These men lay some things down on the causeway in the very midst between the narrows, and then get them back into the marsh again. No sooner are they gone but there comes the sound of weaponed men going, and presently there is the head of a much bigger com, pany coming on to the wide space betwixt the narrows, three hundreds of men at least. They were armed and

not very good order. When the first among the of them came to the place where the Deepdalers marsh/lurkers had been, they found lying athwart the causeway, one on each side, two dead porkers, two dead dogs, two hares and in the very midst a fox, these also dead. The first men wonderatthis, and get off their horses and handle the carcasses; then they call others to look at them; and some deem this the work of Dwarfs or fairies or such like; and others say this is a sign or token of the up/country folk to rise upon them, & that they had best send men arfoot to search the marsh; and others that they should send tidings to the rearward folk. And some say one thing, some another, and all the while

their fellows are thronging into the wide place till they are all crowded together, and not a third part of them knowwhat has befallen, and deem that something has goneamiss; & therear, ward fall to drawing their swords&cry, ing out: To it, to it! Slay, slay! Deepdale, Deepdale! till scarce a man knew

mounted as well as might be, but kept Wonder

The ambush his right hand from his left.

areat poice and this turmoil a the Eater, cried out from the marsh at the right hand: Go back, ye swine, to Deepdale & Then another sang out from the north: If ye can, ye dead dogs F Then Stephen again: This time ye must run like hares Learn lore of the fox next time, if ye can, cried the northern voice, Hndeven therewith was the twanging of bow, strings from either side, & the whistle of shafts and spears, for the foemen were near enough, and men and horses fell buddling on the causeway, and the shafts rained on without abatement. and the Deepdale riders were in sorry case indeed; and many of them were good knights well tried in the wars.

BEN some gat off their horses and entered the marsh, & found no better hap there, for they were speedily slain by axe and sword of the East Cheapers; or they squatted in the mire and yielded them to whomso, ever was before them, of whom Stephi

Boardcleaver is forth

en gat a good knight fullarmed. But Osberne was otherwhere. for some of the Baron's men spared not to turn their backs & ride all they might rearward: but they went but a little way in, to the narrows ere they saw steel before them, and there across the causeway stood the company of the Dalesmen, even such as were not with the bowmen. Desperately they drave at them; but it was all for nought, for the first four fell, they and their horses, before the long spears of the Dalesmen, & the others were cumbered with the wound, ed & the slain, so that they might not come on ashorseback. howbeit, some dismounted & fell on sword in hand. Then forth from the ranks of the Dales, men came a slim warrior in a long hauberk and bright basnet and a shield on hisarm, and he put his hand to his left side and drew, and it was as if a beam of fell blue flame flashed in the sun: & hecriedout: for the Dale! for the Dale! hasten, fellows, & followon, for Board, cleaver crieth for a life # And therewith he entered among the Deepdale

n

daters flee

The Deep- folk and smote right and left, & with each stroke hewed a man, and they fell back before him; & then the Dalesmen were by his side instead of the foes, & still be went forward and men fell before him, and still came on the spears of the Dalesmen; and now all they of Deepdale, whether afoot or on horses back, turn & flee away toward the place

of the first slaughter.

hen Osberne cried to his men: Off the causeway now, all ye Dalesmen; these ye shall not chase, they shall fall in with chasing enoughanon; and nowmust the cause, way be clear of all but foemen if I know aught of Sir Medard's mind. Ye have done well. Therewith he gathim quiet, ly from off the causeway, and all they followed; they went but a littleway, & then about on the tussocks around the alder bushes, and turned toward the causeway and awaited new tidings.

PEEDILY they befell; for anon they heard a confused noise of crying and shouting, and thundering of horse/hoofs, and clattering

of weapons and war gear, & then burst They chase out from a corner of the causeway all the Baron's the throng of fleers, spurring all they men

might, weaponless, many of them jost, ling and shoving each other, so that every now and then man and horse fell over into the marsh & wallowed there. till the Dalesmen came up & gave them choice of death or rendering. And came greateries of: East Cheaping for the Portel and H Medard, a Medardl and the riders of East Cheaping came thrusting among the fleers, and with the first of the chasers was Medard himself bareheaded, so that all might know him, and after him his banner of a Tower and an Eagle sitting therein; and then came the banner of the good town, towit, three Woolpacks on a red ground; and then the rest of the riders. Andall that went by inaminute or two; and thereafter came the bowmen, all ber mired with the marish waters, but talk, ing high and singing for joy. Said Os, berne: Come ye now, fellows, and join ourselves to these, for they will not runaway like to the horses. Now belike

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In the meads

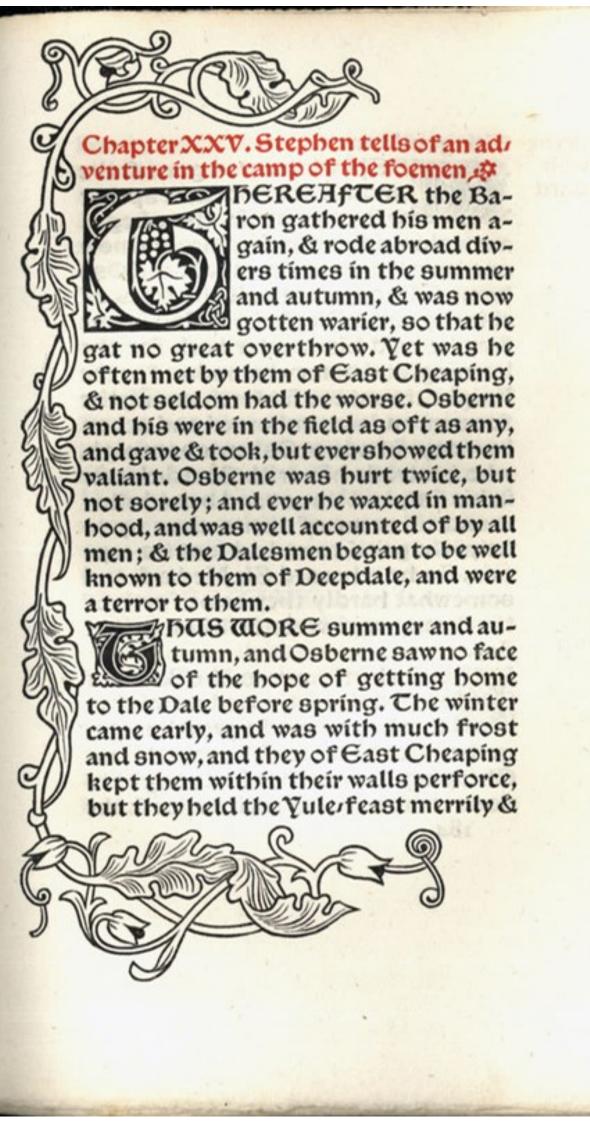
has Sir Medard done the business, so we may follow him fair & softly & he may yet have somewhat to do, quoth a man who was of that country; for in a while this marish ends, & the causeway comes out on to fair and soft mear dows, and there we may look yet again to come on the Baron & his & Sooth is that, quoth the sergeant from amongst the bowmen on the causeway: yet is not the good Knight so harebrained as not to abide ere he falls on. save he see no defence in what is left of the Baron's array. Ye shall see; but come thou up, Master Osberne, with thy Dalesmen, and let us get on to the said sunny meads out of this frogcity.

on together at a pretty pace; and Osberne had not yet sheathed Board-cleaver, but bore him on his shoulder all bloody as he was. So in an half hour they saw the hard meads before them, and then they set up a shout and ran all together, for they heard the noise

of battle, and sawsome confusedrun, The battle ning and riding, and knew not what it is done might mean. So on they ran, till they had come up on to the crown of a long but low ridge whence they might see the whole plain, and straightway they set up the whoop of victory. for sooth what they beheld was the two banners of Sir Medardand the Porte following on the last of the fleers, and beyond them the wholehost of the Baron fleeing away as men discomfited; so they rested to catch their breath on the top of the ridge, & of all of them that went outfrom East Cheaping the night before there was not one man lacking. Then they set off again toward the bat, tle, their weapons on their shoulders and their horns blowing; & they went speedily, and presently they saw that Sir Medard and his had slacked in the chase & were standing together about the banners with their faces to the foe. Wherefore they also went slower, and theymettogether with many glad cries; &then Osberne came to Sir Medard and hailed him joyfully, & therewith thrust

They go back to the town Board/cleaver back into the sheath and said: Meseemeth, Captain, that the battle is done. But came their whole host to flee away? Said Sir Medard: We drove the routalong the causeway, and they, when they came on to the hard meadow, might not stay them; and the rest, who saw them coming on the spur and our banners in the chase, knew not how many or how few were following on them, & they turned also, deeming they were safest at home. And so now we will gather the spoil togeth, er and wend fair & softly back to East Cheaping.

they gathered; and all the foot, men gat them horses and rode with the others, so that they all came back safe to the good town before sunset. Thus ended the first riding of the Baron of Deepdale.



Osberne and Sir Medard

with good heart.

BEN winter was gone & the snow & the floods & gowing snow & the floods, & spring was come again, there began anewskirmishing and riding; and now one, now the other prevailed; and Osberne fell to learning all the feats of chivalry under Sir Medard. And in one fray he paid his master back for the learning, and somewhat more; for the Knight thrust too far forth among the foemen, and was unborsed and set on bymany; &hadnot Osberne been nigh, who bestrode him with Boardicleaver in his fist, and thrust and hewed all around till some of theirs came up to help, the good town had lost its captain. So he rehorsed Sir Medard, and somewhat hardly they came forth of the throng, and were not ill beaten that day.

Deepdale had waxed so mighty that he gathered a great host to gether, & came therewith against East Cheaping, so that they had nought to do save draw within their walls: & the

Baron sent a herald, and bade thereby The yield them, on such terms, over and ar challenge bove paying their truage according to his will, that they should batter down their walls, and take his men into their castle & have his burgreve over them, and moreover that they give over ten of their best to his mercy. This challenge they nay said in few words, for the town was well victualled and manned. Wherefore on the morrow early the Baron assailed the walls with many men, but gat nothing thereby saveloss of good men; and the assault over, Medard and his opened the gates and went forth on the foemen while they were yet in disarray, and won much and lost little.

DEREAFTER the Baron assailed the walls no more, but cast a dyke about the town and sat down before it; and he had abundance of victual coming in to him from his country/side, so that his men lack/ ed nothing. But whereas his dyke and the towers of earth and timber which he let build thereon were scarce man-

is burt

Osberne ned so well as they should have been, because there was so much of them, the East Cheapers did not leave them wholly in quiet, but fell on oft & hard, and slew the Baron many men and did himmuch scathe. Hnd men in the town were in good heart, and said one to the other, that if things went no worse than this they might hold out merrily till winter should break upon the leaguer. But in the last of these skirmishes Os, berne was hurt sorely, and though he was brought off by his fellows, & lost not Boardicleaver, as wellinigh betid, he must needs keep his bed somewhat more than a full month ere he was well bealed.

a Conadayin September, when be was much amended and was growing strong again, came to him Stephen, whom he had not seen for some days, and seeing that there was no man in the chamber save they two, spake to him & said: Captain, I would have a word with thee if I might. Said Osberne: Speech is free to thee, Stephen @ And the Eater said: 186

I have been outrargates of late, for I Stephen deemed that if I might find adventures tells a tale it would be for thy health & Said Osberne, laughing: Yet maybe not for thine, Stephen. I were loth to come to Methermel without thee @ Said Stephen: At this rate it may be long ere we come to Wethermel I would we might hasten the home/coming, said Osberne, knitting his brows, but I wot not how that may be since the Baron is yet so strong @ Hh, but I have a deeming how it may be done, said Stephen, but there is peril in it, Osberne stoodup & said: What hast thou been about, runagate? Master, said he, I will tell thee. five nights ago I did on raiment of the fashion of them beyond Deepdale, and I had with me a fiddle, and was in manner of a minstrel; and thou wottest that I am not so evil a gut/scraper, & that I have many tales and old rhymes to hand, though I am no scald as thou art. Well, I got outragates amight tide by the postern on the nook of the south east tower, the warden whereof is a friend of mine

Stephen the minstrel own, and bade him expect me by midnight of the third day; & then by night and cloud I contrived it to skirt the dyke & get me about till I came north, west of our north gate, & then somehow I got up over the dyke, which is low there and was not guarded as then, and in a nook I lay still till morning came. And there I let myself be found by one of the warders, and when he kicked me and challenged me, I told him what I would as to myself, and he trowed it, and he brought me to his fellows, who, a five of them, were cooking their breakfast, and they gave me victual and bade me play and sing for their disport, and I did so, and pleased them. Thereafter one of them took me along with him toward the west side of the dyke, & I played and sang; and so, to make a long story short, I worked round the dyke that day till I was come to the south side of the leaguer, and there I lay that night in good entertainment; but on the morrow I went on my way, and before evening I had come backagain to the north/west, just where 188

I had started from. There I fell in with he sees the the maniatiarms who had kicked me Baron up the morning before, and he fell to speech with me, and showed me many things, and amongst others the great bastide wherein, said he, the Baron of Deepdale was lodged, and that it was little guarded, which mattered nothing by day, but by night he deemed it some, thing rash of the Baron to suffer so few men of his anigh him. Now while we spake together thus there was a stir about us, and we and others rose up from the grass where we were lying, and lo it was the Baron who was come amongst us, so we all did him reverence. he was a dark man, rather little than big, but wiry & hard bitten; keen and eager of face, yet was there something lordly about his bearing. Heluck would have it became straight to where we stood together, and stayed to look upon me as something unwonted to him, for I was wholly unarmed, save for a little knife in my girdle; and I was clad in a black gown and a cotehardy of green sprigged with tinsel, and had

and fox's tonque

hare's heart my fiddle & bowat my back. We louted lowbeforehim, & hespaketomy friend: Is this big fellow a minstrel? Wea, lord, said the other Said the Baron: Looking at his inches, 'tis a pity of him that he hath not jack and sallet & a spear over his shoulder. How sayest thou, carle; what if I were to set thee in the forefront of the press amongst the very knighthood? Noble lord, quoth I, I fearmeif I came within push of spear thou wouldst presently see me running, so long are my legs. I am a big man, so please you, great lord, but I have the heart of a hare in me. he looked upon me somewhat grimly, then he said: Meseems thou hast a fox's tongue in thee, carle, and I promise thee I have half a mind to it to hand thee over to the provost/marshal's folk, to see what they could make of whipping thee. Thou maniatiarms, hast thou heard him lay his bow over the strings? Yea, lord, said the man; heplayeth not ill for an uplander, Let him try it now before us, and do it well withal if he would save the skin of his

back & Speedily I had my fiddle in my he plays hand, and fell to, and if I played not to him my best, I played at least something better than my worst. And when I had done, the Baron said: friend, how many such tunes canst thou play? and canst thou sing aught? It would not be so easy to tell up the tunes I can play, lord, said I; & sing I can withal, aftera fashion Said the Baron to the many attarms: Bring thou this man to my lodging tomight some two hours before midnight, and heshall play & sing to us, and if we be not sleep, eager he shall tell us some old tale also; and I will reward him. And thou, I shall not make thee a maniatiarms this time. though trust me, Imisdoubt thy hare, heart. There is no such look in thine eyes @ Hnd he turned away & left us. So we wore the night merrily enough till the time appointed, what with min, strelsy and some deal of good wine.

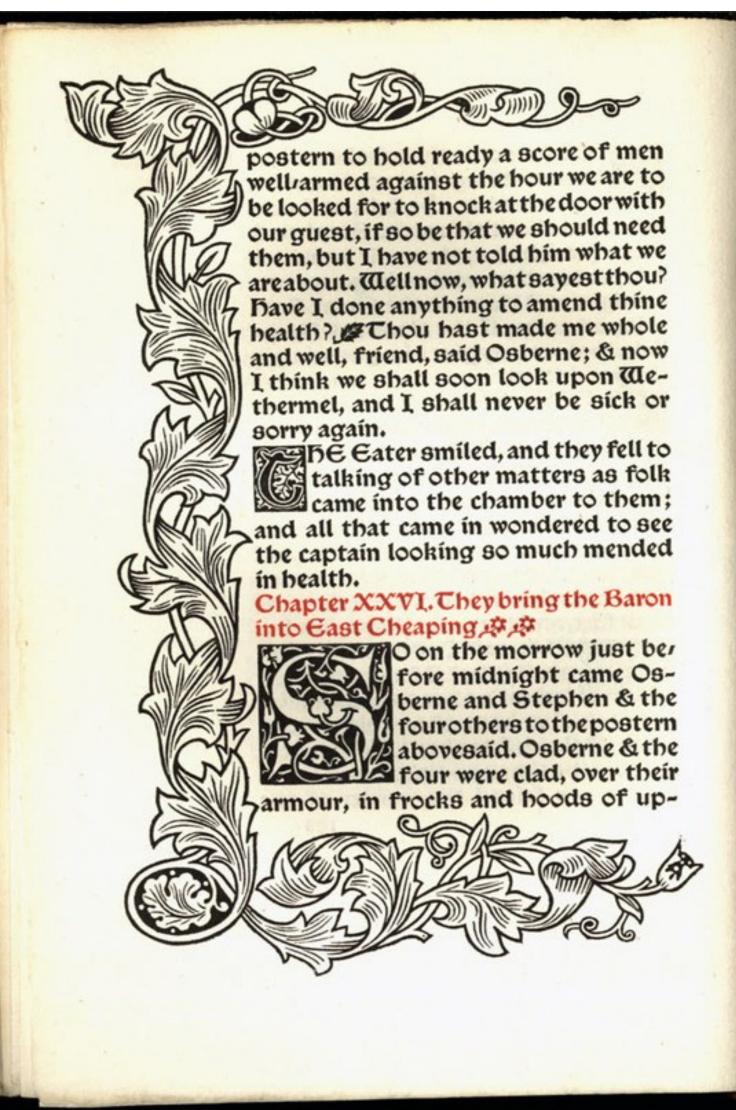
the Baron's lodging I went, which was not right great, but hung goodly with arras of Troy. And I had the luck to please the lord;

Back in the town for I both played and sang somewhat near my best. And he bade give me a handful of silver pennies, though I must needs share them with my soldier friend, unto whom the lord forgat to give aught, and bade me come the next night at the same time; which I did, after I had spent the day in looking into everything about that side of the leaguer. But when I came forth with my friend from the lord's lodging that second night, and I the richer therefor, I did him to wit that the next morning early I should take my soles out of the leaguer and make for my own country, whatever might happen, so that no so many questions might be asked if I were missed on the morrow, as belike I was. Well, the end of this long story is, that a little before midnight I crept away and over the dyke and came to the posternand my friend, who let meinto the town, and here I am safe & sound. Now, Captain, canst thou tell me why I took so much trouble in my disport, with no little peril withal?

gom for some time Osberne had Of the plot been walking to and fro as he bearkened to the tale, and now he turned about sharply to Stephen & said: Yea, I know; thou wilt mean it in aday or two that we should go, we two, by night and cloud to the Great Bastide and carry off the Baron of Deepdale, that we may give him guesting in the good town.

TEPHEN smote his palms to gether & said: Wise art thou, child of Wethermel; but not so wise as I be. The shall go, we two, but not alone, but have with us four stout fellows, and of wisdom enough, not Dalesmen, for too simple are they and lack guile. To say sooth I have chosen them already, and told them how we shall fare, and they are all agog for it.

Work LL, said Osberne, and when shall it be? Of a sooth thou lettest no grass grow under thy feet. But hast thou told anyone else? @ Said Stephen: Tomorrow nightis the time appointed, and I have bidden my friend the warder of the



country fashion; but Stephen was in Now comes his minstrel's raiment, save that he bore Steelhead no fiddle, and had a heavy short sword girt to him under his cotehardy. The night was moonless, but there was lit, tle cloud, so that there was a glimmer of starlight. As they opened the door came forth from the ingle a tall man, unarmed as it seemed, and clad as a gangrel carle, & Stephen without more ado stretched out his long arm and caught him by the breast of his coat. The man stirred not nor strove, but said softly: Dost thou not know me, Stephen the Eater? I come to see the child of Wethermel; he shall know me by the token of the Imposition of Bands. And I am come to help him & all you. That heard Osberne & spake softly to the others: This is a friend and a stout beart; he shall be of all avail to us Speak not, said Stephen, but hold we on, and go crouching till we be under the lee of the dyke Beven so did they, and Stephen led the way, but Osberne came next and Steelhead with him; they spake not together, but

02

They meet Osberne felt the stronger for having the warder him beside him, and his heart was full

of joy.

O they clomb the dyke, & as they topped it they saw a weaponed man on his feet betwixt them & the sky. Stephen stood up straightway & fell arwhistlingamerry tune, but softly enough, while he made a sign to the others to fetch a compass and go creeping past this man. So did they, while Stephen & the warder walked to ward one another; but so soon as they met, the warder knew his friend, and hailed him & said: Well, minstrel, thou art back again pretty soon; what is to ward, man? Said Stephen: Sooth to say, I went not all the way home; for it came into my mind that maybe the Baronmight call for me again; & when it rains florins I am fain to have my hat under the spout & Said the warder: Thou art come in time, for the Baron is somewhat ailing, & whiles he sleeps not well amights; it was but last night when it was so, and he sends for me and asks me of thee, and biddeth me 196

fetch thee; and St. Deter the uproar The minwhen I told him that thou wert gone; strel & his & it was hardly that I escaped a whip- kinsmen cord supper. howsoever, his wrath ran off him in a little, and then he bade me look out for thee, & if I find thee I am to bring thee to him at any hour of day ornight wherein the armour is off him: wherefore, see thou, in happy hour art thou come. So abide me till I go and fetch a fellow to keep my watch, and then will I go on with thee to my lord. Mait awhile, said Stephen; to say sooth I have hereby an old carle, my uncle, and his son, a young swain, and both they are good at song, and the older man a very poke stuffed full of oldtales: how were it if I brought them along? It were good, said the warder, for it shall, see thou, make a change of disport for our lord, & that will please him the more. So go now, bring up hither thy kinsmen, & I will see to my watch & we will meet here straightway.

Othen Stephen went to his folk, who were creeping nigher and nigher to the Great Bastide, &

to the Baron

They come were as now in broken ground somewhat bushed, a good lurking/place to wit. There he finds them, and bids the four abide their coming back with their prey, which now he nowise doubted of, and takes Steelhead and Osberne along with him, and so brings them to the warder; who laughed when he saw Steelhead, for he went for that time all bent and bowed, and, as he deemed by what he could see under the dim sky, ragged & wretched. Said he: Minstrel, thou wert scarce in luck to happen on this rag of a kinsman of thine. hast thou no better man? Said Stephen, grinning in the dark: Hbide till ye have proved him. Trust me, he hath something better than sour curds in his belly. Mell, said the warder, letrarbel Hs for the young man, he seems like enough. Nowthen, fellow, for apullat the florin/tree.

they went, the four of them, toward the Great Bastide, and none hindered them, deeming that they were of the service of the Baron. Even at the door of the Baron's

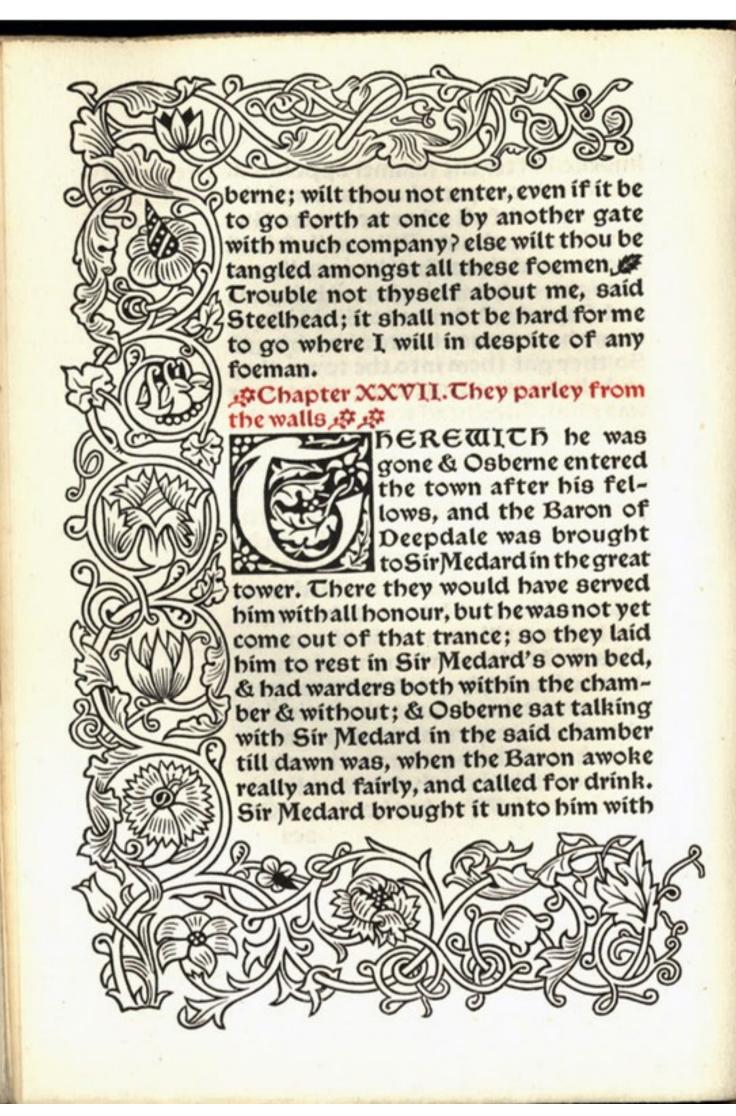
lodging the warder, there was but one The warder and a chamberlain, nodded friendly gagged to the soldier, and let them pass unquestioned. They entered the chamber. wherein now was no man, as the Baron would have it when as he listed to sleep. The soldier went forward on tip/toe, but Stephen trod heavily, and Steelhead laughed aloud, and went straight up to the great man's bed/head, & fared to pass his hand over his face from his forehead to his chin, just touching him, but the sleeping man waked not. As for Osberne, he stood betwixt the door & the soldier, and drew his sword forth from under his carter's frock, but it was not Boardicleaver, for he had left him at home. The soldier looked from one to another, and stared astonished at their demeanour. Straightway then he had both Stephen and Osberne on him at once, nor had be any senses nor might to strive with them, who stripped his coat off over his head, gagged him, and tied him hand and foot. By then they had done this, Steelhead had taken up the naked Baron & set

They go back to the dyke

some of the warder's raiment on him, and done on him the said warder's coat and sallet over all; and there stood the man of worship, waked up now, as it seemed, but looked before him as if he saw naught, even as a man who walks in sleep. Stephen in the meantime unstrung his fiddle and began to play a slow sweet tune thereon, & let his big but melodious voice go with it, & thus they brought the lordship of Deepdale to the door; and still he seemed of no avail, save to walk on as Steelhead would have him. So out they fared, and none hindered them any more than when they went in; and they came to the bushed ground where lay the four townsmen & stirred them, and so went on all seven with their new fellow the Baron, who still walked like a man in his sleep.

warder who had taken the place of Stephen's friend, so that he might not challenge them, and came fair and softly to the dyke, and thereafter to the postern. There Stephen

knocked after the manner appointed, Steelhead and the door opened and showed the goes passage all full of armed men. But Stephen cried out: All's well, friend Dickon, and there shall be no sally out tomight, only take us in and bring me and Captain Osberne to Sir Medard, for we have somewhat to show him, So they gat them into the town, they and their new guest; but ere the door was shut, Steelhead took Osberne by the skirt & drew him a little aside, and said: Lad of Wethermel, in all ways hast thou shown thy valiancy, & Lam gladofthee. Now I have come from the hillsides & the crannies of the rocks to look upon thee, and I must get me back at once for within a builded town I may not be. But I can see that it will not be long till we meet in the mountains. So I tell thee, when thou deemest thy need and thy grief to be as great as it may be, hie thou to the little dale where first we met, and call on me by the token of the bow I gave thee then, and presently thou shalt have tidings: now farewell @ Yea, but hold, said Os,



his own hand, and the Baron stared at Stephen him and said: Art thou of the service mocks him tomight? I know thee not @ Quoth Sir Medard: Hnd yet we have been near enough together ere this, lord Baron; thou shouldst know me, meseems, The Baron looked hard on him & then round about the chamber, & cried out: Holy Mary 1'tis Medard the carle leader. Where am I? and where is the evil beast of a minstrel? hath he beguiled me? Said Medard: Lord, at this pres sent thou art in a chamber of my poor house in East Cheaping. Doubtless to/morrow.after we have had some talk together, thou and I and the Porte, thou mayest go back home to Deepdale, orabide here awhile to see how we can feast, we carle warriors, and to be holden in all honour.

came forth Stephen the Eater and said: Lord, lo here the evil beast of a minstrel who hath verily beguiled thee; but, Baron, it is to thy gain and not thy loss. for to morrow shall the war be ended, and thou shalt be free to go back again to

Medard sounds a parley

the fair women of Deep dale whom thou lovest so much, & shalt save thy men, attarms, and thy weapons & tents and timber, and victuals and drink a great heap; and all this I deem, & more maybe, wouldst thou have lost hadst thou goneon sitting perversely before East Cheaping all for nought. So I will not say pardon me, but make friends with me rather for being good to thee And therewith hereached out his great hand to the Baron; but Osberne drew him back by the girdle, and chid him for mocking a captive, while the Baron turned his face to the wall and covered up his head with the bediclothes.

riding & running in the leaguer next morning when they could find the Baron nowhere; and one said this and the other that; & he cried Kill & slay, & he cried flee ere we all come to like end; and great was the doubt & the turmoil. Hmidst of which comes Sir Medard on to the battlement of the north/west tower, & beside him a squire bearing a white banner, and a herald

withatrumpet, which herald presently Sir Degore blew a loud blast, but such an one as speaks sounded not of war but of parley. So when the captains and leaders heard the said blast & saw the white banner of peace, they deemed that new tidings were toward, and a half score of them crossed over their dyke bearing a white banner with them, & came close under the tower whereon stood Sir Medard; and the chiefest of them, an old hoar man and very wise, hight Sir Degore, stood before the others all unhelmed & said: Is it Sir Medard that standeth up there? Yeaverily, said the Knight; and what art thou? art thou a leader of the host that sitteth about us? Said the other: I am Sir Degore, of whom thou wilt have heard; under my lord the Baron of Deepdale I am the leader of this host. And I have come to ask what thou wouldst of us Said Sir Medard: I would see the Baron of Deepdale & he is sick this morning, said Sir Degore, and may not rise; but if thou wouldst render the town and the castle unto him, it is all one, thou

The greybeard's cunning mayest make meserve thy turn; I know hismindfull well, Sir Medard laugh, ed: Nay, said he, we will wait for that till we may see the Baron himself. But tell me, Sir Knight, what is all this stir and hubbub in thine host this morning? Said Sir Degore, without tarrying the word one moment: There is agreat aid and refreshment come to us out of the East Country, both of victual and men, and our folk be welcoming the men and sharing the victual There is nothing in this then that we have heard, that ye cannot find your Duke, and are seeking him up & down? Nay, nothing, said the grey/beard, wagging his head But the folk that were with him looked on each other and thought within themselves how wise theoldman was. And Sir Medard spake when he might for his laughter: Sir, thy lord did well to make thee captain under him, for thou art a wise & ready liar. But so it is that thou speakest with one who knoweth the tale better than thou. To ye, bring forward my lord Straightway came two squires.

wholed a lean dark man between them, The Baron unarmed, & clad in a long furred black speaks gown. He took off his hat, and thereupon Sir Degore and all they below knew him for their lord. he spake at once & said: Sir Degore and yeothers, my lords and captains, can ye hear me? Yea, lord, said Sir Degore & Then said the Baron: This then is my word and commandment, that ye give leave to all our folk/in/arms to depart each one to his own house, and to bear away with him his weapons and armour and three horses if he be of the knighthood, & one if he be of the sergeantry; but the others, archers & villeins, may take one horse between three to bear their baggage and ease them on the journey. But the flour and wheat and wine, and all the neat & sheep, ye shall leave behind; for the folk of this coun, try/side and the good town have occasion for them. But as to mine own mats ters which are of mine own person, as arms and raiment and jewels and the like, ye shall bring them unto me here in the good town, where I am minded

he tarries in the town to abide two or three days that I may hold counsel about weighty matters with the Porte & the burgreve. Moreover, I would have thee, Sir Degore, & a five of my counsellors & a half score of my servants, come hither to me to abide with me for my aid and service while I tarry in East Cheaping. Now this is my will and pleasure, & I shall beno wiser lateron; wherefore do thou, Sir Degore, go straightway & tell my will to the captains and sergeants and the knights, so that the hosts may presently break up.

and the other Deepdalers were abashed when they knew that their lord was a captive in the hands of the foemen; yet they seemed to think that the terms of the good town were not so hard as might have been looked for, since they had gotten this so great

advantage.

OM Sir Degore spake and said:

Sir Medard, wilt thou suffer me
to come up to thee, so that I
may speak with my lord privily?

To what end, said Sir Medard, since Sir Degore thou hast heard thy lord's command- enters the ment? wilt thou not obey him? Yea, town said Degore, if I have heard his last word; nevertheless I were fain to come up and speak with him @ Come up then, said Sir Medard; yet I must warn thee that it may be easier for thee to come in to East Cheaping torday than togoout therefrom. Moreover, bethink ye if ye dally how it would be were we to open our gates & fall upon you with all ours, and ye disarrayed and leader-

BEREMITH he gave word to open the postern to Sir Degore, who entered and was brought to the top of the tower, and there he went up to the Baron and bent the knee to him and might not refrain his tears; but the Baron laughed, yet somewhat hardly. So they two went aside into an ingle of the tower toward the town, while Sir Medard and his stood aloof awhile. Then turned back Sir Degore to them of East Cheaping, and said: Sir Medard, I pray thee leave to depart 200

less.

The leaguer is broken up tomyhost, that I may do after the bids ding of my lord Yea, go, said Sir Medard; yet I would have thee remember that I pray for a long life for the Baron of Deepdale, since he hath becomeso good a friend to our town, and that thou wilt be in the wrong if thou

do aught to shorten it.

O Degore went his ways, and he and those counsellors & leaders went back sadly to the leaguer, and fell to work to undo all they had done the six months past. And it was no long time ere the stout men, at arms of Deepdale began to flow away from before East Cheaping, and the men of the town held good watch all the while; andere it was evening divers bands of them went outrofigates in good order to see that none of the Deepdalers abode in array in the leaguer, and found nothing there which they had cause to dread. And they took much spoil of that which the Baron's host must needs leave behind. Meanwhile Sir Medard and his made what cheer they might to the Baron; and Sir Medard showed



Osberne unto him, and told him all the The war is tale of the wolves and the slaying of ended Bardcastle, and did him to wit that much of the valiancy which they of East Cheaping had shown in the war came of this lad of Methermel. And the Baron marvelled, and looked upon Osberne and said: Well, lad, if ever thou arthard bestead, come thou to Deepdale, & we shall find somewhat for thee to do: & I bid thee thrive hale and well @ howbeit Sir Medard told not to the Baron that Osberne had been one of them that bore him off the last night. Yet some howhecametoknowitintimetocome: I wot not through whom or how.

Chapter XXVIII. The Baron of Deep

dale makes peace

Onow the war was over, for thenext day the Baron of Deepdalesignedthedeed of peace which gave up to the Porte of East Cheap, ingallthatforwhichthey

had withstood him; and withal some deal of ransom he had to pay for his own body, how much my talesteller



The Baron goes his ways knoweth not, but deemeth that they would scarce put the snepeuponhim as to bid but a squire's or knight/bache-lor's ransom for a free baron, a lord of wide lands, who had under him towns,

tolls, and markets.

Otheransom being paid, or some deal of it, and pledges left for the remnant, the Baron went his ways in no very evil mood, and it was soon seen that they of East Cheaping would no longer need the men they had waged over and above those who were due to them for service, wherefore leave was given to such waged men to depart, & the Dalesmen amongst others. But gifts were given them largely, over and above their warrpay, and to Osberne and to Stephen the Eater in especial. Unto whom, amongst other things, the Butchers' guild of the good town did, on the eve of his departure, bring a great and fair ox, white of colour; and they had gilded the horns of the beast, and donehim about with garlands: but on a scroll between the horns was fairly writthewords, The Eater's Ox. Which

Gifts to Osberne &

gift Stephen received as it was given, very lovingly, & many a cup they drank together over him; but Stephen said Stephen ere his friends departed: Yet look ye, lads of East Cheaping, though this ox be mine, yet shall he not be the ox of the Eater: for slav him will I never. but let live on and on for love of our friends of East Cheaping so long as I may buy, beg, or steal a cow's grass for him.

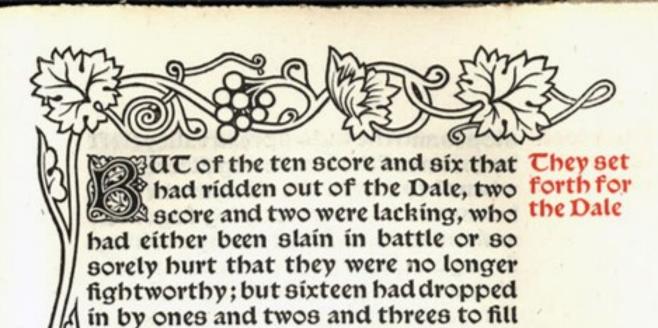
S for Osberne, though he bought in the booths a pretty many of such things as were goodly and little, of goldsmiths' work and the like, to flit to his friend across the Sunder, ing flood, yet no gift would be take, save a very fair armour of the spoils of Deepdale: and this was no gift, said Sir Medard, but what he had earned himself by hard toil enough.

LL loved him, but Sir Medard in especial, who had fain dubbed him knight; but Osberne would not, and said that such had been nowont of his fathers before him; and he looked never to go very far from the

The Dalesmen take leave

Dale and for no long while. And even if I may not live there, quoth he, I look to die there; and he reddened therewith till the eyes looked light in the face of him But Medard said: Wheresoever thou livest or diest thou wilt live & die a great/heart. But this I bid thee, when so thou hast need of a friend who may show thee the road into the world of needs, when thou hast aught to hide or aught to seek, come thou unto me, and be sure that I shall not fail thee.

his whole heart, & they kissed and departed with all love; and as the Dalesmen rode down the street toward the western gate, it was full of folk shouting out praises and blessings; and the windows were full of wer men who cast down flowers on them as they went along, saying that but for these stout hearts they might have had neither town nor honour nor children, & that nought was good enough for such friends as these. Thus rode the Dalesmen out of East Cheaping.



back but little fewer than they came. Chapter XXIX. Osberne and his men return to Methermel ***

the places of these, so that they rode

little ere sunset of the berginning of October, came those Dalesmenamongst the black rocks & rough places that crowned the

bent which looked down west over the Dale. And now, though they had been talking merrily and loud for the last three hours, their hearts were so full within them that scarce a word might they say one to another. And when at last they had won through that rocky tangle and had opened Methermel, & noughtlay before them but the grassy



They look down on Methermel

slopes and the widerspread valley cleft by the line of the Sundering flood; now, when they saw in the clear air the grey houses of Methermel lying together, and the smoke of the evening cooking, fires going up to the heavens, and the sheep wending on, thick and huddling before the driving of three tall men, & the kine moving towards the byre and the women amongst them, then this befell: that whereas they had been all of one mind that when they came to the crown of the bent they would spur on & race merrily toward Wethermel, yet nowwhen it lay before them, and there was so little a way betwixt them & its hearth, they all of them with one consent drew rein and sat still on their horses, as if they had suddenly come face to face with the host of the foemen. Yea, some there were, and they rather of the oldest than the youngest, who might not refrain them, but fell arweeping & sobbing, whether it were for joy or sorrow, or a blending of both, may scarce be said.

SBERNE wept not: sooth to Osberne is say, the turmoil of hope & fear welcomed within his heart ate up somewhat the softness that might else have mastered him at this new sight of his fathers' house. he rode forth before the others, and lifted up his voice and loudly cried a blessing on the Dale and the dwellers therein, and then rode on soberly down the bent, and the others followed him still silently. But when they were drawn anigh, and every soul, man, woman, and child, ran forth from the garth to meet and welcome them, then at last their joy brake forth, and they gat off their horses & gave themselves up to the caresses of the women and the embracing of the carles, & loud was the speech & the laughter amongst them.

SBERNE WAS met first by Nicholas his grandsire, who kissed and embraced him, and then gave him up to his grandame and the foster/mother, and one or other of these twain would scarce let goof him a long while.

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The homecomers feasted after victual for so big a company of men; for nought would serve the folk of Methermel but that the whole fellowship must abide there that night. But all was got ready in a while, & meanwhile the stay/at/homes might not have enough of praising & caressing the folk returned, and everything they said or did was a wonder.

and the hall was thronged as much as might be, & folk fell to meat, and now they were all exceeding merry; & when they had done eating, the boards were drawn to make more room, and they fell to the drink, and after the first cup to Christ, & the second to Allhallows, the third was drunk to the home/comers from the war. Yet were not the stay/at/homes to be put off with solittle, & they called a cup for Osberne the captain of the warriors; and when it had been drunk, then all folk looked toward the captain to see what he would do; but he rose up & stood in his place, his cheek

flushed and his eyes sparkling: & the Osberne word came into his mouth, & he sang: sings

Drave down the Dale
Hnd thrust us out
To the battle shout.
We wended far
To the wall of war,
Hnd trod the way
Where the edges lay;
The rain of the string rattled rough on the field
Where the haysel was hoarded with sword edge and shield.

Mhen the play was begun,
Hnd little but white
Was the moon all night;
But the days drew in
Hnd work was to win,
Hnd on the snow
Lay men alow;
Hnd at Yule fared we feasting in warwarded wall,
Hnd the helm and the byrny were
bright in the hall.

sings

Osberne Then changed the year And Spring was dear, But no maid went On mead or bent. for there grew on ground New battle round. New war/wall ran Round houses of man; There tower to tower oft dark and dim grew At noontide of Summer with rain of the yew.

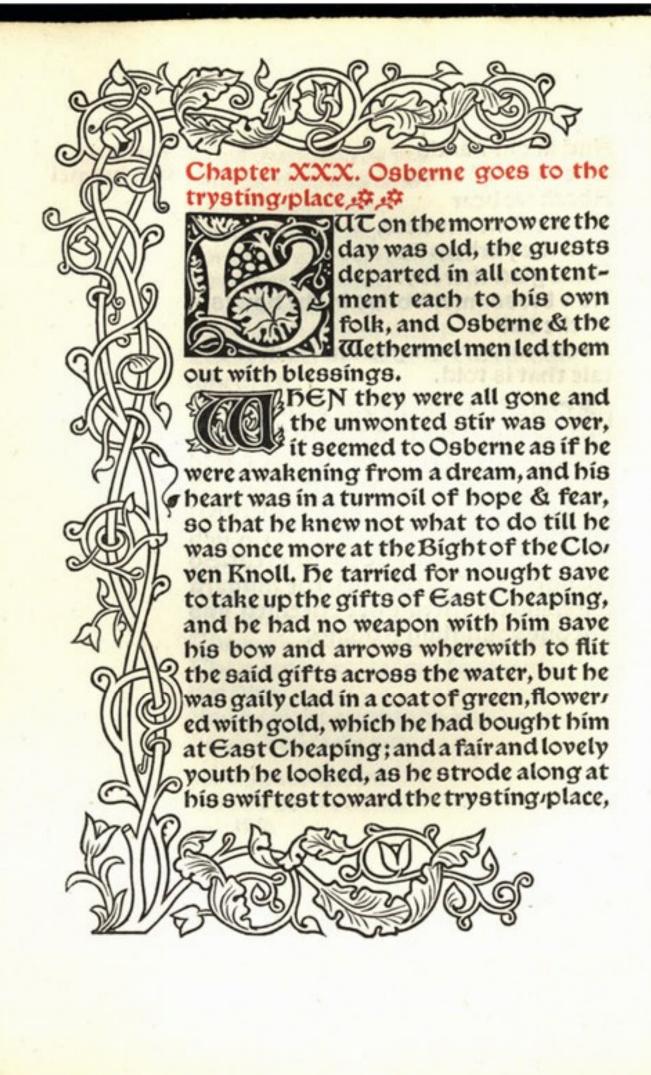
> 'Neath point and edge In the battle hedge Medwelt till wore Late Summer o'er: In the Autumn night Me steered aright The wisdom bark Through the steel thronged dark; The warrior we wafted from out of the fray, And he woke midst the worthy and bearkened their say.

Now peace is won And all strife done, 220

Joy in Methermel

The fame of lands
Hback we bear
To the Dale the dear,
Hnd the fathers lie
Made glad thereby.
Now blossometh bliss in the howes
of the old
Ht our tale growing green from their
tale that is told.

ing at his song, & all men said that every whit thereof was sooth, and that this was the best day that had ever dawned on Methermel; and great joy and bliss was on the hall till they must needs go to their rest. So changed was Methermel, the niggard once, and that, it might be deemed, was but one youngling's doing.



his face flushed, his brows a little knit he fares to with mingled trouble and joy, his lips the ness parted with his eager breathing. Whiles as he went he said to himself, how many chances and changes there were, and how might he expect to find Elfhild there again? and next, when he had enough afflicted himself with thinking of her sick, or dead, or wedded, his strong heart of a youth threw it off again, and he thought, how could evil such as that befall him, the stalworth and joyous?

o he fared till he came within sight of the ness, and saw no figure there on the top of it; yet he straightway fell to running, as though he knew she had been waiting for him a long while; but as he ran he kept his eyes down on the ground, so that he might not see her place empty of her. But when he came to his place he lifted up his eyes, and there to his great joy saw her coming up the slope of theness; and when she sawhim she uttered a great cry, and spread out her arms & reached out to him. But as for Their meeting

him, he might make neither word nor soundagreat while, but stood looking on her. Then he said: Is it well with thee? Oyea, yea, she said, & overwell as now BArt thou wedded? said he Yea, she said, unto thee O would that we were, would that we were I said Osberne Olshesaid, benotsadthis morning, or wish for aught so that it grieve thee. Bethink thee how dear this moment is now at last, when our eyes behold each other B hast thou come here often to look for me? said he Shesaid: It was the fourteenth of May was a year that we parted; now is this the eighth day of October. That makes five hundred & eleven days: not often, er than that have I come here to look for thee.

spake, that his bosom heaved & his face changed, and he wept. She said: I wish I had not said that to make thee weep for me, my dear. The spakeashis face cleared: Nay, my dear, it was not all for thee, but for me also; & it was not all for grief, but for love.

She said: With this word thou giv- Elfhild est me leave to weep; and she wept in weeps good sooth. Then in a while she said: And now thou wilt sit down, wilt thou not? and tell me all thy tale, and of thy great deeds, some wind whereof hath been blown to us across the Sundering flood. And sweet it will be to hear thy voice going on and on, and telling me

dear things of thyself.

VENsowill Ido, said Osberne. if thou wilt; yet I were fain to bear of thee and how thou hast fared this while; and thy words would I hear above all things & The voice of him quavered as he spake, & he seemed to find it hard to bring any word out: but his eves were devouring heras if he could never have enough of looking on her. forsooth there was cause, so fair she was, and he now come far into his eighteenth year. She was that day clad all in black, without any adornment, and her hair was knit up as a crown about her beauteous head, which sat upon her shoulders as the swan upon the billow: berbair baddarkened since

a

Of Elfhild's beauty

the days of her childhood, & was now brown mingled with gold, as though the sun were within it; somewhat low it camedown upon her forehead, which was broad & white; hereyes were blue, grey and lustrous, her cheeks a little hollow, but the jaw truly wrought, and fine and clear, and her chin firm and lovely carven; her lips not very full, but red and lovely, her nose straight and fine. The colour of her clear and sweet. but not blent with much red: rather it was as if the gold of her hair had passedover her face & left some little deal behind there. In all her face was a look half piteous, as though she craved the love of folk; but yet both mirth & swift thought brake through it at whiles, & sober wisdom shaded it into something like sternness. Low, bosomed she was yet, & thin flanked, & had learned no tricks & graces of movement such as women of towns and great houses use for the beguiling of men. But the dear simpleness of her body in these days when the joy of childhood had lefther, and a high heart of good long,

ing was ever before her, was an allure- Osberne ment of love and far beyond any fool- longs for ing such as that.

omshe said: how thou lookest on me, dear Osberne, and thy face is somewhat sober; is there aught that thou likest not in me? I will doas thou biddest, and tellall the little there is to tell about me, ere thou tellest meall the mickle thou hast to tell about thee.

E said, and still spake as if the words were somewhat hard to find: I look upon thee, Elfhild, because I love thee, and because thou hast outgrown thy dearness of a year and a halfagone and become a woman, and I see thee so fair and lovely, that I fear for thee and me, that I desire more than is my due, and that never shall we mend our sundering; and that even what I have may be taken from me. She smiled, yet somewhat faintly, and spake: I call that ill said; yet shalt thou not make me weep thereby, such joyas I have of the love in thy words. But come, sit thou down, & I shall tell thee q2 227

her tale

She tells my tidings.

Othey sat down each as nighunto the edge as they might; and Osberne spake no more for that while, but looked and listened, & Elf, hildsaid: Day by day I have come hith, er, sometimes sadderand sorrier than at others, whiles with more hope, and whiles with less, whiles also with none at all. Of that thou wottest already or mayest bethink thee. Of tidings to call tidings the first is that my kinswoman, my mother's sister, has changed her life: she died six months ago, and we brought her to earth by the church of HIlhallows the West, hard by the place of the Cloven Mote. Needs must I say that, though she was the last one of my kindred, the loss of her was novery grievous sorrow tome, for ever she had heeded me little & loved me less, though sheusedmenotcruellywhen I was little; and her burial was a stately one as for a poor house in the West Dale. Now furthermore, as for the carline who is the only one left to look after me, by my deeming she doth loveme, & more were to be looked for of so old & frail, begs a seemingawoman, and that besides her lodging mickle wisdom. Whereof hearken this. which is the second tidings of note I have to tell thee. It is now some two months ago, when summer was waning into autumn, that on an evening just after sunset we were sitting after our wont in our house, which, though it be neither grand nor great, is bigger than we need for us twain. Comes a knock on the door, & the carline goes thereto, and is followed back into the chamber by a tall man, clad neither as one of our country/side nor as a warrior, but in a long black gown with furred edges. he had no weapons save a short sword & a whittle in his girdle; hewas not ill/looked, black/bearded & ruddy/faced, & seemed strong/built, a man of about five and forty winters.

he hailed us courteously, and asked if he might abide with us till morning, and we nay said him not, if he might do with such cheer as we might make him. he smiled, and said any cheer was

overshehath belike more of might than H stranger

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he eyes the maiden closely

better worth to him than the desert as at that time: and he said withal that he had a way beast without who was as weary as was he; and, says he, there is a pair of saddle bags on him, which many would not deem over much of a burden, if they had not very far to carry it.

O I went outrardoors with him to see after his nag and saddle, bags; & I led the horse into the same stall where was winter quarters for our two horses; but this was a very big stark beast, grey of colour, such as we have not in this land, & I gave him hayand barley; but the saddle bags he brought back with him into the cham, ber. Andhe kept ever by my side on the way there and back, and looked at me oft in the failing light, though I was but in my sorry old raiment with bare feet, in such guise as thou hast not seen me for years, my dear. howsoever, Theeded it not at the time, and we both came back into the chamber, where Dame Hnna had now lighted the candles. Shortly to say, we put what meat

he would buy wares of them

and drink we might before our quest. and he seemed well content therewith: and he was merry with us, and showed himself a man of many words deftly strung together, and spared not to tell us many things about tidings of far and noble countries, and the ways of men both great and small therein. And hesaid that he was a chapman journey, ing after gain, & looked to buy wares in the Dale, and therewith he asked us if we had aught to sell him; but Anna laughed and said: fair sir, were ye to buy all this and all that is in it, from groundsill to roofridge, and all our kine & sheep and horses to boot, little would the tide of gold ebb in thy bags yonder. I wot not, he said; who may say what treasure ye have been hoard, ing here this long while . The looked on me as he spake, and I reddened and looked down, for in my heart I was thinking of the pipe and the gemmed necklace which the Dwarfs had given me. And yet more than all, of thy gifts, Osberne, which have been so dear tome: for soothly to say, of these matters I the Dale

he asks of had never told Dame Anna, though she knoweth that I gooft to look upon thee hereand that I love thee. However, that talk ran off, & presently the chapman got to asking Anna about the matters of the Dalers, and the ways of its folk, and amongst other things as to how wealthy they were, and she answered him simply as she could. He asked her also if they loved their bairns and chile dren well, & also if they had any custom thereabout of casting any of their women/children forth, if it happened to be their fortune to have many daugh, ters and little meat, and that especially when the years were bad. But thereat she cried out harol and said that such a deed was unheard of, and that when times were bad & there was lack, then hand helped foot and foot hand.

failed hamdir's Sons once, failed hamdir's Sons once, and may do others again Then beasked withal if it were not true that things had run short in the Dale this last season; and she answered, as was true of this west side of the Dale,

where was no man called to war, that so Elfhild it was. And again that talk dropped. goes to But the carline, methought, looked her bed keenly at him. Afterawhile Anna asked the guest if he had will to go to bed. and he answered, No, he would wake the meat well into his belly. Then she bademe fare to bed, which I did, nought loth, for when all was said I scarce liked the looks of the man. Hs for my bed, it was a shut/bed, and opened not out of the chamber wherein we were, but out of an inner one, rather long than wide. There I lay down & went to sleep before long, but deemed I heard no lit, tle talk going on betwixt Anna and the guest ere I forgat all. And moreover Hnna came tome and waved her hands

to me that I had slept long, but I slipped out of bed & laid hold of my smock to do it on, & even therewith I shrank aback, for there before me, naked in his shirt and holding the door of my shut/bed with one hand & his whittle in the other, was the stran-

over me before I went off sound.

he bids a price for the maiden

ger; but therewithal came Dame Anna and said: Feed him not, for as yet he is asleep though his eyes beopen. Doon thy raiment speedily, my Elfhild, and come forth with me, and let him wake up by himself & Even so I did, not rightly understanding her words. But when we were gotten into the garth & the mead Anna told me all, to wit, how that this wretch, after I had gone to sleep, had bidden her a price for me to bear me off safely & wholly with him. And that may easily be done, says he, as I see of thee that thou art wise in wizarding and canst throw the maiden into a sleep which she will not awake from till due time is; for, says he, I want two things, to have her in mine arms to do as I will with. & thereafter to bear her home with me, will she nill she Now, said Hnna, I would not wholly gainsay him at once, for I would have my fox safe in the trap; so I hemmedand hawed, and said that he might belike rue his bargain unless he were full sure what it were worth; and to be short, I so egged him on & drew him

back, and drew him back & egged him The dame's on, that at last he took off his outer spell raiment, gat his bare whittle in one band and laid the other on the door. Now, my dear, I have long known thy door that I may so do that it will do my willin many matters; so when I saw the chapman's hand on the edge there, of, I spake a few words to it and went to bed myself, whereas I wotted that runagate could not move hand from door, board, or foot from floor, board, till the time which I had appointed to him; and thee also I had sent to sleep till the very time when thou didst awaken e'en now But what shall we do now? said I @ Said Anna: We will abide here in the shaw: there is meat on the board for the guest, and his rais ment will not be hard to find, and he knows where are his horse and his gear and his saddle bags. I doubt me he will not be eager to say farewell either to thee or to me: for he is not man enough to take his sword in his fist against even an old carline and a young maiden So into the shaw we gat us;

wrath

Osberne's as I have told thee, it is at the back of our houses but a furlong off. And there we lay till a little past noon, when we heard a horse going not far off. So we crept to the very edge of the wood and looked forth privily, and presently we saw our chapman riding off west with his saddlerbags and all, & his face was worn & doleful; at that Anna grinned spitefully, nor for my part might I altogetherrefrain my laughter. But thou dostnotlaugh, Osberne? & hesprang up and cried out fiercely: I would I had been there to cleave his skull | Many a better man have I slain for less cause.

hen they were silent awhile, & she sat looking on him fondly, till she spake at last: Sweetheart, art thou angry with me for telling thee this tale? Nay, nay, he said; how might I live save thou told me everything that befell thee? Yet I must tell thee that I well nigh wish I had not heard this one; for there thou dwellest. with none other to ward thee than a carline stricken in years; and though I wotwell from all thou hast said of her,

for the sundering

and this last tale in special, that she he grieves has mickle might in her, yet she cannot be always with thee, nor belike ever thinking of thee. God forbid, sweetheart, that I should speak to thee in the tongue of the courts and the great houses and lords' palaces, whenas for a fashion of talking they say of their lemans, and they not always nor often exceeding fair, that they be jewels beyond all price, whom an host of men were not enough to ward. But this I will say, and he blushed very red at the word, that thou art so lovely & so dear that thy man, thy love, & the stout and good friends who love him, were not overmany for thy guarding even in this lonely place. Hnd with all that I can be of no more use thereto than if I were a wooden man.

he stood up also, & he saw that the tears ran over her cheeks. & he stretched out his arms to her; but she said: Grieve not too much, my friend; and know, as thou saidst e'en now of thyself, that these tears are not wholly for sorrow of thy grief, Elfhild speaks

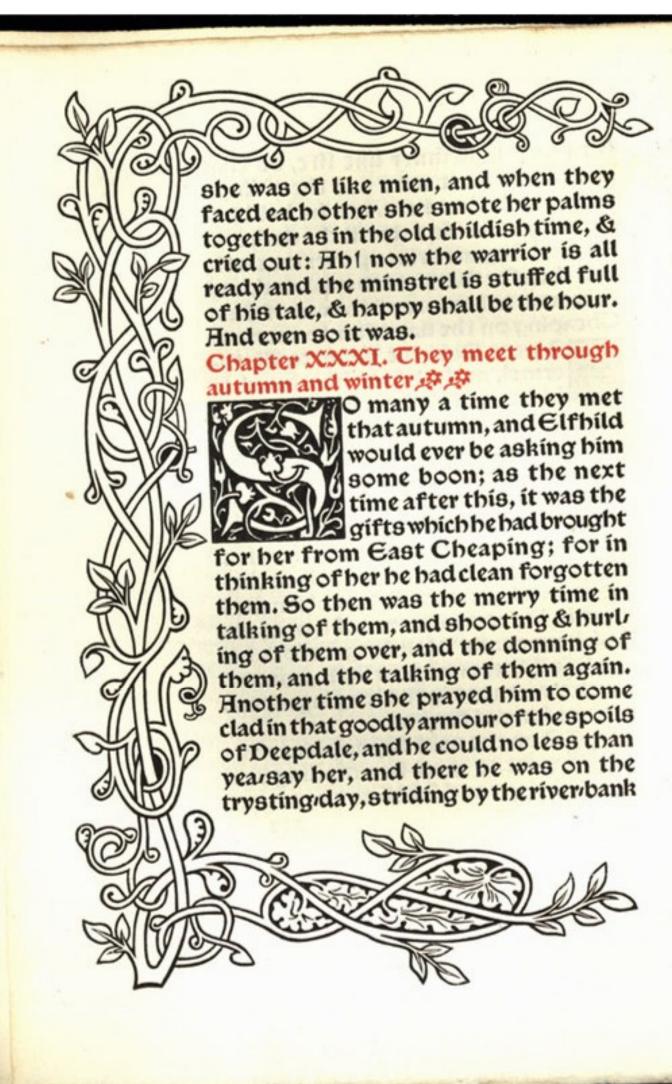
but O1 so much and so much for joy of thy kindness. And one thing I must tell thee, that if I am alone in my house I am at least alone with a friend and one who loves me. And this shall come of it, that now every day I shall come down to the tryst, for the carline will hinder me in no way. But I know that oft thou wilt come to meet me; yet be like often thou wilt not, because I wot how thou hast work to do and things wherein folk call for thee to serve them. So any day if thou come not it shall be well, & if thou come it shall be better.

ing the full sweetness of her.
But she held up her hand & said:
Now I bid thee tarry no longer, but fall
to & tell me the tale of thy deeds; for
soon shall the short autumn day be
waning, & the moment of parting shall
steal upon us ere we be ware & Even
so he did now; but at first, to say sooth,
he made but a poor minstrel, so much
his mind was turned unto what she had
been telling him; but after a while his
scaldship quickened him, and he told

her much in manner like life, so that Osberne she might as it were see the tidings tells his going on before her. And he held her tale enwrapped in his tale till the dark and the dusk began to rise up over the earth. and then for that time they parted, and there was to be more of the war of East Cheaping on the day after tomorrow.

o went Osberne home to Wethermel, and at first it seemed to him as if this first meeting after so long a while had scarce been so good as he had looked for; for both his long, ing to be close to his love, and the fear which had arisen in his heart as to the stealing of her, were somewhat of a weight on him. But after a little, when he had first been amongst folk & then alone, all that doubt & trouble melted away in the remembrance of her, as she had been really standing before his eyes, and there was now little pain and much sweetness in the longing where, with he longed for her.

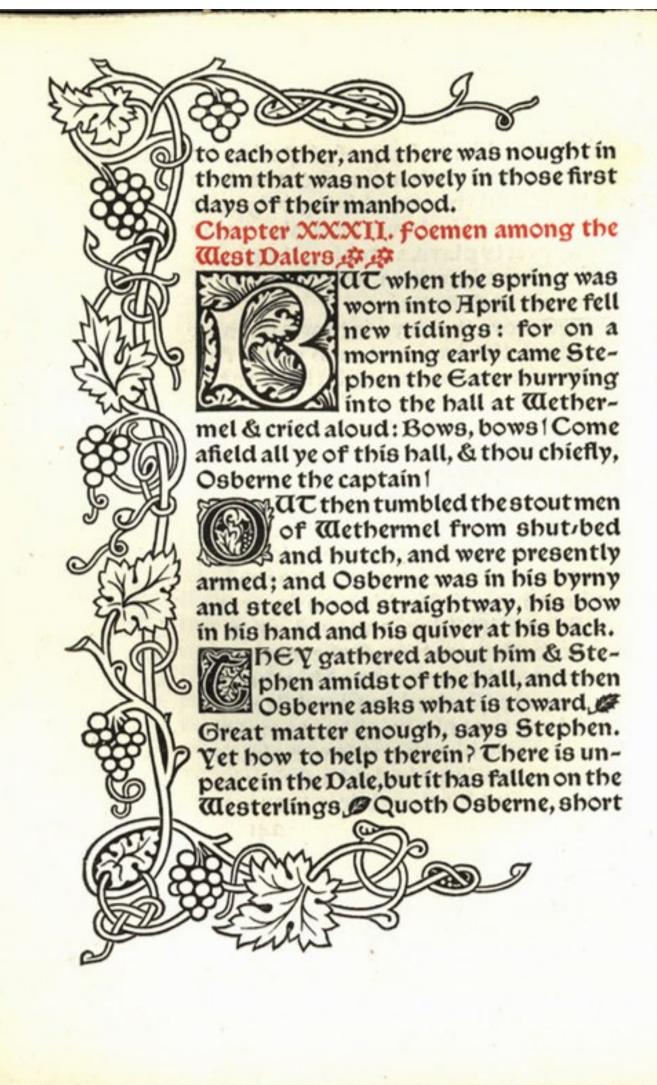
O on the said day appointed he went to meet her, smiling and happy and fresh as a rose; and



in the sun, like an heap of glittering ice They long hurrying before the river when the thaw to meet is warm and the sun shining bright at Candlemas. And over that also went many pretty plays, as taking the pieces off, and naming them, and doing them

on again and the like.

o wore the days into winter, and yet the two saw each other full often even through the frost & snow and ill weather. And when the spring came, then it was dear to them indeed. And by that time had Osberne's fears about the stealing of Elfhild much worn off; though it is to be said that exceeding oft his heart was weary & sore with the longing to hold her in his arms. Yet the most of these times he kept his grief in his own heart: so much as Elfhild was moved when it brake forth from him, & she might, so to say, see the torments of him before her very eyes. Indeed on one while, when for a long time she might not comfort him, she told him that this was almost as bad as seeing him laid ardying before her. But kind and dear they were



& sharp: Ye Otter, Simon, Longdeer, Hlison, take horse and ride straight-way down the Dale and round to every stead, and bid men gather to the side of the flood with bows & sling/spears and shot/weapons of all kinds, & that they stand not in knots and clumps, but drawn out in line, & space enough betwixt each shooter. Bid them to leave not a shaft at home, we may speedily make more, but not to loose once till they have marked their man. Now hasten ye four! But ye others come after me at once, for we will go afoot for the saving of time and the steadying of

a dozen men all told, and all had bows & good store of shafts. Had as they went, Osberne spake to those about him and said: Spreadout, and make little show of force, & show not your bows to the foemen, so that they may contemn us and venture the nearer to the bank. But shoot not till they defy us, lest we smite a peaceful man. Now they were presently nigh

They go down to the flood

12

the shooting.

Hliens in the Mest Dale

enough to see the going of men on the further shore, and they were all riders. It was clear to see that they were aliens, men upon big horses clad in outlandish armour with bright steel headpieces; they bore long spears with light shafts, and a many of them had short horseman's bows and quivers at their backs

along with their targes.

as the men of Methermel drew up to the water's edge, a knot of the said aliens, about a score, came to them shouting and yelling, & there were within sight scat, tered about the fields some two hundreds in all. When they reined up by theflood/sideoneofthem, who seem/ ed by the gold on his armour and weapons to beachief, hove his spear aloft and brandished it, & fell to crying out in what seemed to be words; but since they knew not his Latin they gat no meaning from them, but he spake in a masterfuland threatening voice. Then by Osberne's bidding, Stephen, who stood anigh him, drew a white clout from his scrip, made it fast to his spear

Osberne killsachieftain

& held italoft, to show that they would have parley. But for all answer the chieftain & his brake out a laughing; and then the chieftain gat his spear by the midmost, and made as if he would cast at them; but the flood there was overwide for spear shot. Then one of his folk unslung his short bow and nocked a shaft, and turned to the chief as if asking leave, & the chief nodded him yearsay. Quoth Osberne hastily: Stephen, cover thee! It will be thou. Then if he looses, we loose, for this is a foeman.

and Stephen turned it with his shield. Then the Wethermelers set up a shout & bent their bows, and Osberne loosed first, and the shaft smote the chieftain in the eye, and he fell dead off his horse: Stephen also put a shaft into the man who had shot at him, and three others of them fell withal at the first loose, besides three that were hurt. And the aliens liked the Wethermel breakfast so ill, that they turned their backs to the river at once

Osberne is troubled for Elfhild and scuttled away into the field out of shot, yet not before they had lost two more men and three horses.

a little while to see if the foe would bring up others to go on with the game; but the aliens were over, wily for that, as it seemed; for they but gathered together, & turning all their heads down, dale fared on in one body.

nought of any onset of their neighbours of the West, and sore troubled was Osberne when he fell to thinking that, as the robbers were wending, they must needs chop upon hart Shaw Knolls; so the best he could hope was that Elfhild might flee from her house to some other, or even, it might be, hide her in the wood, which she knew so inwardly.

goquietlydown/stream on the river's edge. Saith he: If aught is to be done from this side, we shall presently have the folk from the lower steads drifting in to us, and we should

make a good band were it not for yon- They come der wet dyke which the thieves have to the Clovgotten them for a defence.

en Knoll

they fared on, and now and again some man of the lifters turned somewhat toward them to look on their demeanour, & whiles one would speed an arrow to them, but did no harm; at last, as they began to drawnigh the narrows above the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, a whole sort of the foemen came riverwards, but somewhat more than half held on the straight way down the Dale. Even therewith came to join the Wethermelers a many of the folk from the downward steads, stout fellows all, and well armed with shot/weapons. And now there was nought for it but on both sides men were drifting toward the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, nor needeth words to tell of the anguish of Osberne's heart and the fierce wrath of his spirit. When the aliens, who were thronging to the river/bank, saw how narrow the stream was growing, they set up a whoop and drewcloser to the East Dalers, and the

They make more part of them got off their horses stand there and marched along foot by foot with them, & they were now within shot of each other, so that the foemen stayed at whiles and shot them a shaft; and now they burt divers of the Dalesmen, but Osberne would not suffer them to shoot back as yet. So came they within sight of the Dwarfs' cave, and there were not a few of the Dalesmen who feared the place even in the turmoil of battle; and some deemed it might be unlucky to them, but others said that most like Osberne's good luck would prevail over the evil will of the Dwarfkind.

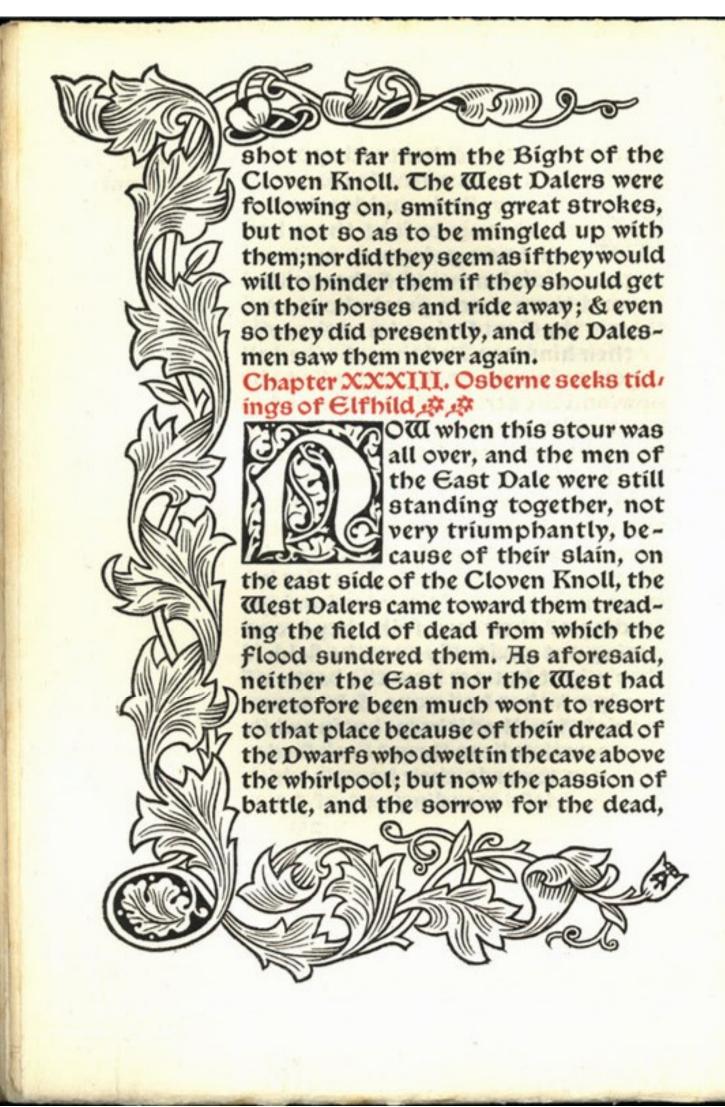
TO WHEN Osberne came to the trysting place, he and his were fully two score men, and they of the stoutest: & he stood before them all on the very place where his feet had so often stayed for the comforting of his heart and the caressing of his love: there he stood, handling a heavy castspear.

Osberne smites a chieftain

Ntherewith the aliens pour ed on to the ness, howling like dogs, and on to Elfhild's very standingsplace. Before all his men came a chieftain of them, clad in armour wrought gaudily & decked all with gold and silver, and with a great red horse tail streaming from his helm. he hove up his hand & poised a great spear, but in that nick of time Osberne cast his weapon suddenly, with a fierce shout, and all about him and behind him he heard the loose of the Dalesmen's bows. Sooth to say, as he cast, he almost looked to see all that turmoil clear away as a dream, and that he should see Elfhild falling with the spear in her breast. But nought it befell: the gold/decked chieftain took the spear under his arm, and he and his spear fell over clashing and clattering down into the gulfs of the green water, & many of the strong, thieves fell before the shaft/storm of the Dalesmen; but therewith the foemen shot also, and some of the Dalesmen were slain and divers burt, but that abated

Theslaugh, ter by the flood their hearts no jot. Then Osberne took twelve shafts from out his quiver and nocked them one after the other, and every time he loosed a man's life went away on the arrow/point; but bitter was his wrath & his grief that he might not slay them all and deliver his love. Many a shaft smote him, but the more part of them fell off scatheless from the rings of hardcastle's loom. Now were many of the thieves slain; yet so fierce & eager were they, that the more part would not draw aback, nay, some there were so hungry for that cruel slaughter of them that they heeded not the sundering of the flood, but rushed on as if there were nought between them, and fell over into the boil of waters and were lost in the bottomless depths. So fared the battle, and the ranks of the Dalesmen began to thin; but Osberne had no thought of going back a foot's length, and his men were so valiant that they deemed nought evil save the sundering of the flood.Osberne was hurt in three places, but not sorely; but Stephen bore a shaft in hisside, yet hestood upon his The West feet & shot no less valiantly than erst. Dalers come

ing throng before the rage ing throng before them had some new goings on in it and began to sidle landward, & therewithal beyond them rose a great shout, and therein the East Dalers knew the voice of their kinsmen, and they shouted all together in answer as they plied the bow, and the strong thieves turned about and ran yelling and cursing toward the landward & the south, west, for the West Dalers were upon them with spear and axe and sword. That was the end of the shot/stour, and the aliens cameneveragain that tide under the shafts of the East Dalers. But ber twixt the kenning of their dead and the tending of their hurt folk, they stood gazing out anxiously over the field, if they might but see how the battle of handy/strokes had gone, & by seemingright hard had it been; but in a while they saw the aliens thrust back & edg, ing away towards their horses, which they had left standing out of bow-



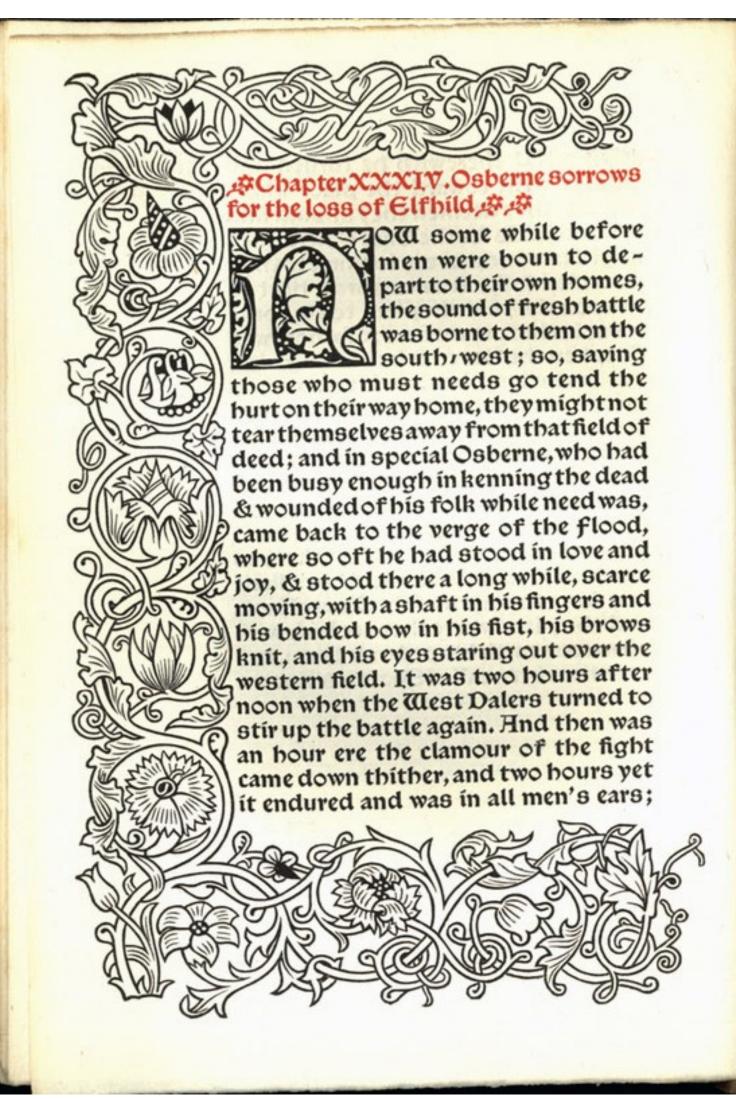
and the perplexity of the harrying had The East swept all that out of their minds a Dalers are while. So the chiefs of the West Dalers thanked stood among the corpses of the aliens on the crown of the ness where Elfhild was wont to stand, & fell to talking with their brethren of the East; & the man who took up the word for them all was Mulfstan of Coldburne, astead of the lower West Dale. And he fell to praising the good help which the East Dalers had given them by cleaving somanfully to the shot stour, which he said had been their deliverance: for delivered they looked to be. #Hlbeit, says he, they whom ye dealt with so manfully, and whom ye have now put to the road, be not the whole host of them, whereas while one moier ty turned aside to the shooting, the other went on down the Dale & somewhataway from the flood; and we left our brethren marching against them, and must turn presently to their help, ing, lest they be out numbered by the strong, thieves. Yea, & already we fear lest these devils have wasted certain

Osberne seeks tidings

of our steads which would lie on their road before our folk might fall in with them. And now give us leave! but we pray that ye may live hale and happy for the help ye have given us; & thou in special, Osberne Mulfgrimson, whom we know, and the tales of thee.

TOTAL as he was on the point of turning away, Osberne said in a loud shrill voice: Abide, mas, ter, and tell me one thing, to wit, the names of the steads which the thieves have wasted @ Said Wulfstan: I may not, because I know not: hereabout it is thin of dwellings; 'tis a five miles ere ye shall happen on a good homestead, Longryggs to wit: here is nought but a little stead, fallen to be a cot, wherein dwell none save two women, one old and one young. It is not like that the thieves would have stayed for so little a thing. farewell; if the battle goes handily with us ye shall have tidings thereof to/morrow if ye will come down hither; or a little lower down may, be, lest the Dwarfs begrudge us.

ND therewith he turned and Stephen is went toward the place where wounded they deemed they should find the battle. Hs for the East Dalers, they might tarry no more in looking to their wounded folk; & a many were hurt so grievously, that they had to be borne homein the four corners; of whom was Stephen the Eater, & he lay long sick, but in the long last, and it was a two months, was healed as well as ever he was. Hhalf score were sore hurt like to this; but of them who might carry their grief home on their own legs were at least a score and six; but thirteen were slain outright. And these it was deem, ed good, after due thought taken, to lay them in earth in the field but a little way from the Bight of the Cloven Knoll; and the place where they are laid, with plenteous earth heaped over them, has ever since been called Shooters' Knowe.



and then it died away, & the East men Osberne is began to wander off from the watch- left alone ingiplace, wending this way and that, and the autumn day fell to wane, and soonthere were none left save Osberne & a half dozen of the men of Wethermel. And one or another of them pluck, ed him by the sleeve, & bade him come home with them, since the day was done, and the battle would not quicken again, and the West Dalers had overmuch on their hands to bear them any tidings till the morrow was a new day. Atfirst he heeded them nought, but in the end be turned on them with an angry eye, yet spake mildly, & bade them get them home & eat and sleep. But leave me here, quoth he, that I may watch awhile lest aught of new befalleth: & I will come to Wethermel when my heart will suffer me So they departed and left him; and there he stood, till himseemed he had been there a long, long time. Night grew black about him, and silence fell upon the cloven plain of the Dale, save that below him the speech of the eddies seemed to grow greater

he hears strange sounds in the night as other voices failed. Then arose the wind, and went through the long grass and talked in the crannies of the rock, wall of the flood as the waters spake below; and none came anear, nor might he hearken any foot of man, only far, off voices from the steads of a barking dog or crowing cock or lowing cow.

Clast, when the night was ber ginning to change amidst the depths of the darkness, him seemed he heard somewhat drawing anigh and coming up the bent on the western side, and he wotted not but it might be the unshod feet of men, and he lightly asked himself if the ghosts of the dead made any sound with their feet as they trod the puddled earth whereamany had trodden before them; and so wild was his heart grown now, that he thought it no great marvel if those that they had laid to earth there should stand up & come before him in the night watches. Then he nocked an arrowon his bowistring & handled his weapon, but could not make up his mind to shoot lest the bow/draft should

pierce the quiet and rouse up inextin- Elfhild's guishable shrieks and moans; & even sheep therewith, above the sound of those paddling feet, he seemed to hear a voice beginning to cry, & he thought within himself: Now, nowitison the way, and presently the air shall be full of it; and willitkindlefireintheair? Butatthat point of time the voice sounded louder and was in two or three places, & even amidst its wildness the familiar sound smote to his heart, for it was but the bleating of sheep, and now all the bent over against him was alive with it. And of a sudden he was come to himself & wotted what it was, that it was Elfhild's sheep, and that they had been loosed or thrust out from their folds, and had wandered up there in the dark where so oft she had led them before. And now the mere bitterness of grief took the place of his wildness, and he let his bow & arrow drop to earth, and cast himself down on to the trodden ground & buried his face in his hands and moaned, and speedily the images of his life seemed to come, & the sor-

82

grief

Osberne's row he must face passed through his soul, for he knew that she was gone, & either slain or carried away to where he should never hear of her or see her a-

gain. T last, that his grief & wanhope might not rend his heart & slay him then and there, and lest all the deeds where to he was fated should be spoiled and undone, self-pity fell upon him with the sweet remembrance of his love, and loosed the well of his tears, & he wept and wept, and might not be satiated of his mourning a long while. But when the night was yet dark and no sign of dawn in the sky, and, might be have seen it, the south, west wind was driving the rack low adown along the earth, he rose up slowly and gat his bow & arrows into his hands, and weakly and stiffly, like a man who bath been long sick, he fell togoing along theriver, side toward Methermel, and his feet knew the way though his eyes might see it not. And as he went, with the wind whistling about his ears and the picture of Methermel before

home to Methermel

his eyes, he found that life was come be goes again to him, and he was beginning to think about what he should be doing to win some way back to the love that had been rent from him. Ever and anon, forsooth, as he was a midst such thoughts, the tears brake out from his eyes again, but still now he could refrain them better and better after each outburst, and he had no more wildness as erst, as if he were out of the world and drifting be knew not whither or why; but now he knew which was him, self, and which was grief and pain.

T was but just the grey of the morning when he crept into the hall at Wethermel, & found his bed and cast himself thereon, and, all undone by weariness, fellasleep at once.

Eawoke with the house astir abouthim, and arose & sat down to eat with the others, and was noharsher of speech than his wont, albeit he looked stark and stern; and to some it seemed as if he had aged ten years since yestermorn, & they deemed that the death of the folk lay heavy

Mulfstan of the Mest Dale speaks

on him, as was like to be, and they said as few words to him as might be, for his grief seemed awful to them. But when they had eaten he bade three of his men come with him down the water to seek tidings of the West Dalers. So they went together, & alittle below the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, out of earshot of the Dwarf folk, they met with others from the lower steads come up, on the same errand; & the West Dalers were just come to the water/side with Mulfstan for their spokesman, who forsooth had gotten some scratches from the war, beast, so that his head and his arm were bandaged. Now he spake: hailto you, stout hearts of the East | Yemay deem that we prevailed in the second battle yesterday, or ye would scarce have seen us here this morn. Now the battle was foughten all about the garth and the houses of Longryggs, which the strong, thieves had fallen on to waste, but the women, folk of the steadhad saved their lives by flight, & the carles thereof were in our company fighting valiantly. So whatever is lost

was lost in open battle, wherein two Elfhild is score & six of our bestmen have change missing ed their lives; but as for the strongthieves, besides them who fell in your shot/stour, we have buried over seven score; and the rest are fledaway, many of them grievously hurt. Wherefore, friends, we have won a great victory: Godand his hallows keep us from any more such ! Hnd it seemed as if the goodman were weeping/ripe, whereof none marvelled. But Osberne spake, and the sound of his own voice seemed strange unto him: Tell me, goodman, have ye lost nought by the murder of men whenas the strong thieves fellon some stead? @ Nay, said Wulfstan, the thieves have wasted no other stead save Longryggs, whereas, as I said, the folks escaped the murder, & this little house which is hard hereby of Bart Shaw Knolls. There for sooth the two women be missing, but no slain body of carle or quean have we found, nought of slaughter save the slaughter of kine and sheep. And I must tell you that this morning our folk sought

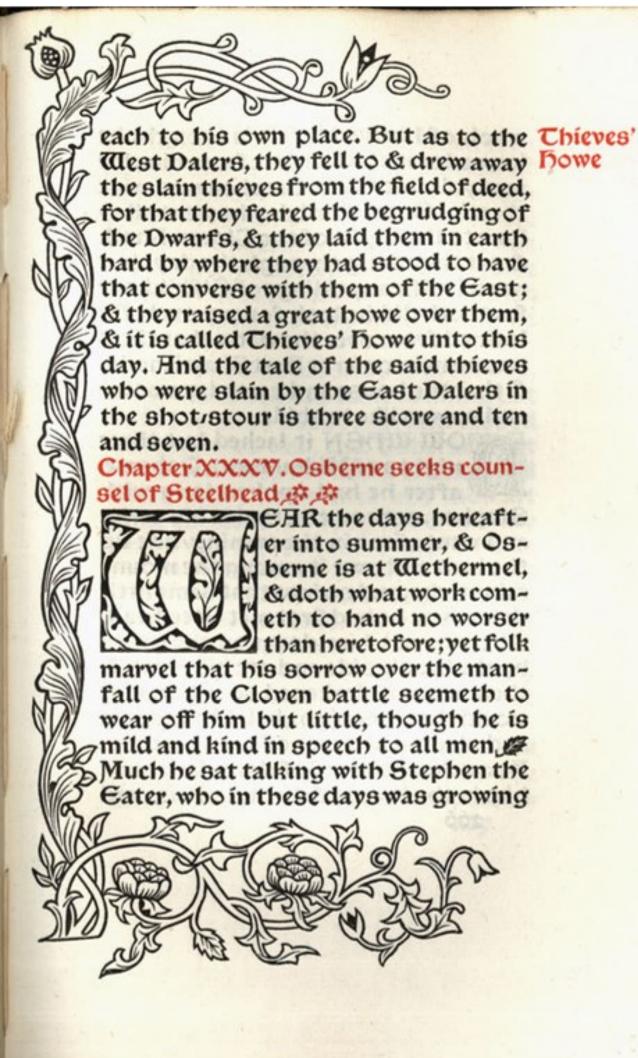
he praises the valour of the West Dalers

all about heedfully, yea & looked into every thicket and nook of the wood.

ELIKE, quoth Osberne, they will have carried off the two wor men? Said Mulfstan: I fear me it may well be so @ Said Osberne: Well, this loss of two women, whom maybe ye shall find again, is but little; but grievous is the manifallof the bati tles. Yet not soon meseems shall reive ers fall upon West Dale now they have learned the valour of the folk thereof. Beried be the Lord God that the folk yet liveth and shall live!

Espake measuredly and in a loud voice, so that all heard, and they cheered his speech with deep and strong voice; but they who stood night est unto Osberne say that his face was stern and very pale as he spake; and it seemed to them that had Board/cleaver been naked on the West side in that stour yet more of the strong, thieves had fallen.

Bottl they parted, and Osberne &his Wethermelers went home, and the other East Dalers also,



Osberne goes to the bent whole of his hurts, & it is thought he learned some hidden lore from him, for many deemed that Stephen was wise therein. Every third day he went all alone to the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, & sat there long through the day; but never had be any tidings of Elfhild, nor for sooth did he look for any such. Be learned from over the water that there was no newcomer at Bart Shaw Knolls, & that the house and earth lay waste, and so was like to abide.

nights of Midsummer, Osberne, after he had spoken long with Stephen, set some victual in his scrip, and went afoot in the evening/tide up the bent and over it among the mountain/necks, and so into that same little dale where he had first met Steelhead. There he sat him down on the grass by the brook/side and ate his meat, & then, when it darkened so much as it would that June night, he laid him down and slept in all trust of safe/keeping. The awoke at the end of dawn & washed him in the brook, & then clad him and

sat down to abide sunrise. Then even Steelhead as the sun arose it smote a beam of comes light from some bright thing overtop, ping the crown of the hillside before him, and Osberne knew that there was come his friendSteelhead, in such quise as he had first beheld him there; which was in sooth the very thing which he desired.

Osberne stood up to greet him, and Steelhead came to him & put bis arms about him and kissed and embraced him, and Osberne wept for pity and hope of his life. Then said Steelhead: I know thee why thou art come to me; a while agone I laid my hands upon thee that I might make thy body stark for all adventure, and now thou wouldst have me do the like for the soul of thee. Herein will I do what I may, but first we will eat of the increase of Wethermel, that thou may, est see how much I love thee and the land that bred thee.

Osberne bestirred him, and kindled the cooking fire & made ready the meat, and they ate to, together

They talk gether in all content and friendliness. But when they were full Steelhead spake: Nowwhetherwouldst thou tell meallthytale, or whether would st thou be silent thereof, knowing that I know it without words spoken? @ Quoth Osberne: I would tell it @ There is yet time, said Steelhead, smiling kindly on him, so make no tarrying Then Osberne began straightway, and spared not words overmuch, but herein he used the most when he told of Elfhild, what she was like in those latter days, and how his heart enfolded her, and how sweet was her converse with him; and when he was done Steelhead said: What is in thy mind concerning dwelling in the Dale amidst thine own folk? Said Osberne: Mymind it is to live and die here, and do all that is due to the folk of my fathers Said Steel head: Then must thou be healed of this trouble; that is, thou must forget thy love & thy longing, or at the least thou must think more of other matters than of this. for I will not have it that thou my fosterling shouldst be a kill-268

joyamong menof the kindred; where- Osberne fore illeluck will come of it.

will leave

HIDOsberne, knitting his brows: Wethermel I will not be healed in this way. for do I not know that she also is wrapped in sorrow and tormented by longing. Shall I leave her, therefore, as the dastard leaves a wounded friend before the on coming foeman?

TEELBEAD smiled on him. Quoth he: Thou wilt not be healed? So be it; then mayest thou not abide in the Dale amongst the kindred, but carry thy trouble to the lands of the aliens, where there is none to remember the joyous face of thee before the trouble was @ This may I do, said Osberne, and even so shall it be since it is thy will. But hast thou nought else to say to enhearten me in my travel? This I have thereto, quoth Steelhead, that though the world be wide there are many ways about it, and meseemeth that there is somewhereaway whereon thy feet and Elfhild's may draw toward one another SaidOsberne: Mayall good hap

Sir Medard

he will go to go with thee for thy word. Dost thou not see how my face is already gladden, ed thereby? Said Steelhead: This is hope, my son, that flareth up swiftly & fadeth soon; but now this I shall give to thee, as I deem I may, that never shalt thou lack hope so long as thou hast deeds to do. Call to mind what thou thyself saidst unto Elfhild, that the only way to bridge the Sundering flood is for one of you, or both, to wan, derwide in the world. But now tell me. what hast thou in thy mind to do in these days that pass? Said Osberne: I have been thinking of it, that when the Midsummer feast is over I shall say farewell to my folk & ride to East Cheaping to find Sir Medard; for meseems he is the man whom I know out in the world who will put me in the way of deeds & Said Steelhead: And wilt thou go alone, or hast thou a mind to take any with thee? Suppose it were Stephen the Eater, who is a man of lore, and as I do thee to wit, moreover, a friend of our own? Dost thou com, mand me to have him with me, lord?

said Osberne, Nay, said Steelhead, Stephen I but ask thee of thy mind in the mat- shall be left ter Said Osberne: Then I shall tell thee that my mind is to go all birdalone. I would take no part of Wethermel with me, lest I soften towards the Dale, and turn back some fair day of summer & fall to nursing my sorrow therein. Moreover I know of Stephen that he is bothawise man and a champion, and I deem it were well to leave such an one to uphold the good days of Methermel; so that whether I do that which I would, and come back in joy and honour; or do it not, and die away from my place, not without honour it may be, I shall yet know of the thriving of my kindred & the pleasure of Methermel, which shall yet be gloris ous on the earth, even as it were a very living creature & mine own true friend. Manyatime shall I think of it, in good hap and in ill hap, in grief and in joy.

HIL to thy word, son and stoutheart said Steelhead, for herein thou thinkest of it as my very heart would that thou shouldst. Now

on other matters

They talk I see that I have indeed sown the seed of hope in thee, and I call it the lack of fear.

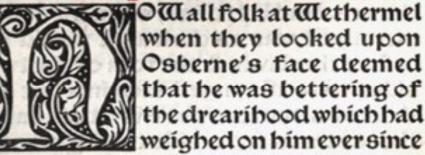
> ND now he brought the talk on other matters, and was as kind and friendly as might be, & Osberne deemedit was a great thing for him that he had so won the love of this noble wight and great/heart. So in all pleasure the day sped, and when it was hard on sunset Steelhead spake: Now must I get me back to my house and home of old time, and thou shalt go home to Wethermel the dear; and now I see of thee that thou shalt hold a cheerful countenance there, and depart when needs must in honour and well-liking of all men.

> they stood up, but ere Osberne turned his face to the west he said: And when shall I see thee again, lord? @ Tho knows? said Steel head; maybe when thou lookest least for me: on the lonely marsh maybe, or in the thick of the forest; or in the midst of the fierce battle, or on thy very death/bed; or it may be not at all in

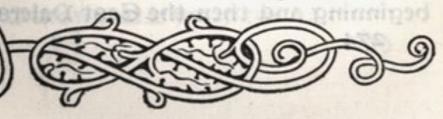


thine earthly life # And that house Osberne whereto thou art now going, shall I turns back ever see thee there? said Osberne o to the stead Surely I deem that thou shalt; and yet most surely not till thine earthly days are over. But now farewell, & my heart goes with thee Therewith he turned and was gone, and Osberne went his ways to Methermel without looking after him. And now it seemed to him as if he had been fain not to have gone back to that well beloved stead, but to have gone on east at all adventure; and helooked toward the day when he must depart at last as a sad and sore time, when hope would be dimmed by mere sorrow and trouble.

Chapter XXXVI. The staves which berne taught to the Dalesmen A A



the battle with the strong, thieves, and



summer feast

The Mid- of that bettering they were right glad, for they were wont to have much joy of his fellowship. Came on therewith the Midsummer feast of the Cloven Mote, which, as aforesaid, was the greatest of all the feasts of the Dalesmen, and Osberne was there with a countenance of good cheer no worser than the best. Now at this feast not only did they do in the heedfullest and solemnest wise all that belonged to Midsummer, as the trundling of the fiery wheel, & the kindling of the bale, and the leaping through the fire; but also before noon, and ere these plays were begun, was high mass sungin the goodliest fash, ion in each of the two churches of Hll hallows for the good rest of them who had fallen manfully in battle with the thieves. And last of all, when the summer night was as dark as it would be before the dawn, & the folk of the two sides were all ranged each in a line on their own shore of the river, they sang these staves from side to side across the Sundering flood, the West Dalers beginning and then the East Dalers taking it up:

IS Summer and night, Little dusk and long light, Little loss and much gain

When the day must needs wane;
Little bitter, much sweet
from the weed to the wheat;
Little moan, mickle praise
Of the Midsummer days,
When the love of the sleeping sun lieth
along
And broodeth the acres abiding the
song.

Mere the Spring to come o'er

Hnd again as before,

What then would ye crave

from the Summer to have?

Sweeter grass would ye pray,

Hnd more learlading hay?

for more wheat would ye cry,

Thicker swathe of the rye?

Stouter sons would ye ask for, and
daughters more dear?

Mell willers more trusty than them ye
have here?

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O the wheat is yet green

The men of the East & Mest Dale sing the Dale

Thesongof But full fair beseen, And the rye groweth tall By the turfen wall. Thick and sweet was the hay On the lealand that lay; Dear daughters had we, Sons goodly to see, And of all the well-willers ere trusted for true The least have ye failed us to deal and to do.

> What then is this, That the Summer's bliss Somewhat ye fail In your treasure's tale? What then have ye lost, And what call'ye the cost Of the months of life Since Winter's strife? for unseldom the Summer sun curseth the Dale With the tears thrust aback and the unuttered wail.

forsooth o'er, well The tale may we tell: 'Tis the spear and the sword 276

The song of the Dale

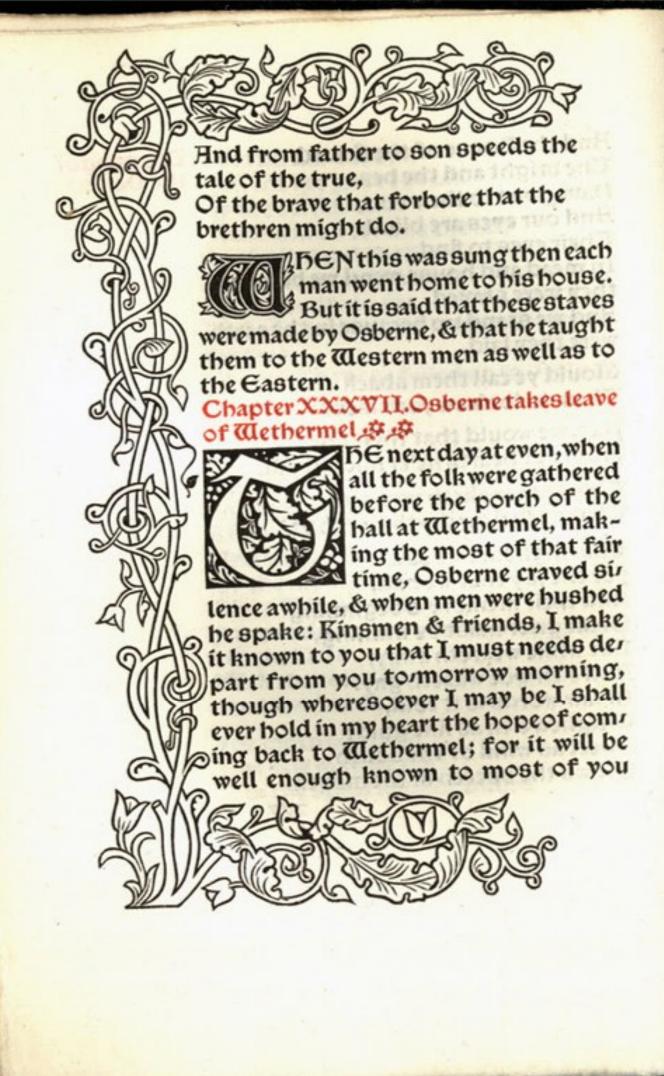
And the house of the Sward.
The bright and the best
have gone to their rest,
And our eyes are blind
Their eyes to find.
In mead and house wend we because they were stayed,
And we stand up because in the earth were they laid.

Mould ye call them aback Then, to look on your lack?

Nay, we would that their tale from our hearts ne'er should fail.

This then maketh you sad, That such dear death they had?

This night are we sad
for the joy that we had,
And their memory's beginning
Great grief must be winning.
But while weareth away,
And e'en woe waxeth gay.
In fair words is it told,
Meighed e'en as fine gold;
Sweet as wind of the south
Grows the speech in the mouth.



that I love the Dale with great love, and Osberne this stead in especial. But now I may speaks to not abide here longer, to such a pass his folk

are things come with me.

mere long to tell if I had the heart to tell it, which I have not. But this much may I say, that I go to seek alife which will lead me back to Wether, mel, it may bein joy, it may bein sorrow, but in either case with such a heart in me as I may live the rest of my days in the Dale, doing all that is due to the kindred and the folk. Now it will be of noavail for any to strive to put me from this mind, or to hinder me in my purpose, for go I must and will. But this even, as we sit amidst the summer and our hearts are softened by beholding the peace and abundance of the Dale, & thinking of all days that have been, and our fathers that have lived & died here, I will ask you all and each one of you to say straightway if in any wise I have wronged or hurt you; and if I have, then will I make atonement tomy power: so that since I may not bear a-

he has a mind to leave the Dale

way with me Wethermel and its folk, I may at least bear away the love of it @ When they heard these words of his they were mostly exceeding downcast, for in sooth to every one of them his fel lowship seemed both a joy and a safe, guard; and of the women, some were moved to tears, let alone his grandame and his foster/mother. Hibeit he had told his mind beforehand to Stephen the Eater, who had dight him all things

ready for departure.

quean amongst them all who had quean amongst them all who had a word to say against him, or might call tomindaught but kindness at his hands; and one after the other they all said so much. But when they weredone, and there was silence again, Osberne spake: Thou, grandsire, art the master of Wethermel, but of late years hast thou suffered me to share in thy mastership; nay, thou hast laid many charges on me which I have taken, and done with them according to my might. Now therefore meseemeth that thou wouldst scarce have it otherwise

but that somewhat of my redes & my They are will and my might should be left after in sorrow me when Lam gone; but if Lerr in this thereat mythought, I pray thee say as much. & I will leave the matter where it stands. and thou to be sole and only master of

Wethermel whiles I am away.

PARE Nicholas thereat, & said that freely would be grant it that Osberne's redes and welldoing should still be felt at Wethermel, and that for his own part the governance of an house so great & lordly as Wethermel had now become was overmuch of a burden to him, and that gladly would be take to any man whom Osberne would put in his place; and in good sooth he deemed he wotted who it would be.

BEN turned Osberne unto Stephen & said: Thou, Stephen, art more in the heart of my redes than any man else, and thou art both awiseman, as I deem, & a proven chami pion; so if I leave thee here in my skin, wilt thou do the best forme, and be debonair with Master Nicholas here and

Stephen is chosen in his place with my grandame, and kind to all the folk? Said Stephen: I will do my best thereto, & will pray this of the folk, that they will not hate me because I am not thou. Ht that word all they gave him a welcome cheer, whereas their hearts burned within them for love of Osberne & for praise of his words, and for sorrow of losing him and hope of his return; so that at that point of time them, seemed they might promise anything.

friend & fellow, reach out thine hand, that I may give thee hanselbeforeall these of what mastership there is in me Even so did Stephen, and they clasped hands thereon.

about him & said: Lo, friends, how the dusk has been creeping on us amidst all this talk. So now do yewomen dight the board and light the candles within the hall, that we may eat and drink together this last time for a long while.

together

VEN so it was done, & all folk They drink sat to meat, and thereafter was the drink brought in, and they drank all a cup to Osberne, and he to them; and then was the cup filled for Methermel, & then again for the Dale; & the last cup was for Osberne's luck. Then came a word into his mouth, and he stood up and sang:

ROM the Wethermel reek The world ways unkenned And the first of the end, for when out there I be Each way unto me Shall seem nought save it lead Back to Wethermel's need, Hnd many a twilight twixt dawning and day Shall the feet of the waker dream wending the way.

When the war gale speeds Pointibitter reeds, And the edges flash O'er the war, board's clash, Through the battle's rent

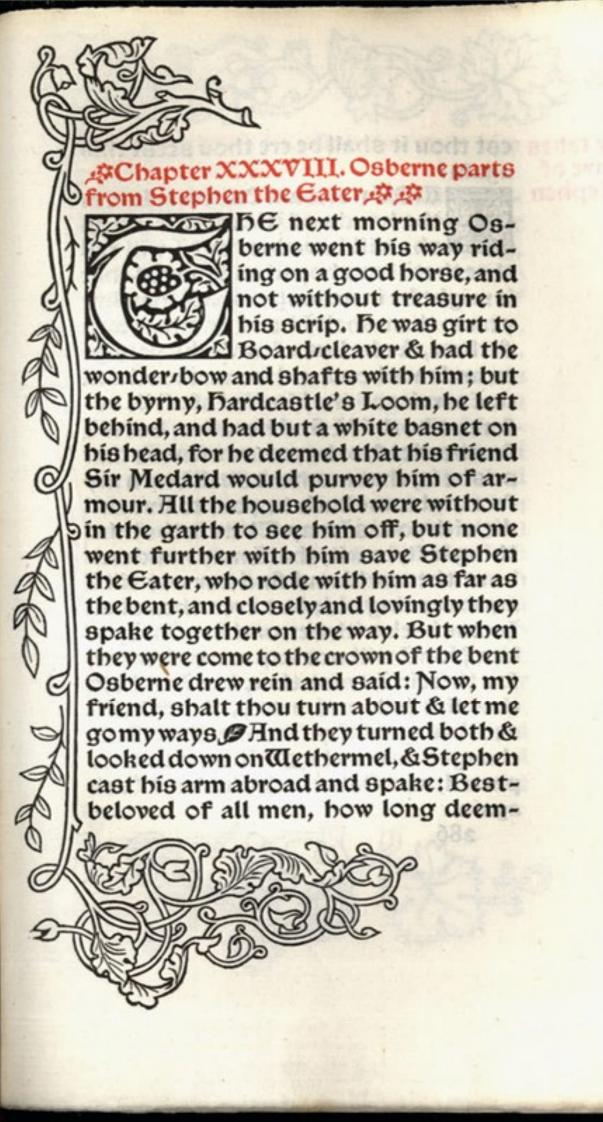
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sings

Osberne Shall I see the bent, And the gables' peace Midst the Dale's increase, And the victory, who oping shall seem tomeoft As the Daleshepherd's cry where the reek wends aloft.

> When to right and left The ranks are cleft, And the edges wan Mate master and man, It shall be as the fall Of a bindering wall Twixt my blade and me And the garth on the lea; So shall day unto day tell the hope of the year, And season on season shall draw the Dale near.

This they deemed kindly sung & well; and now so high rose their bearts, that it was to them as if they saw the day of his returning and the gladness of fellowship renewed.



he takes leave of Stephen est thou it shall be ere thou seest this

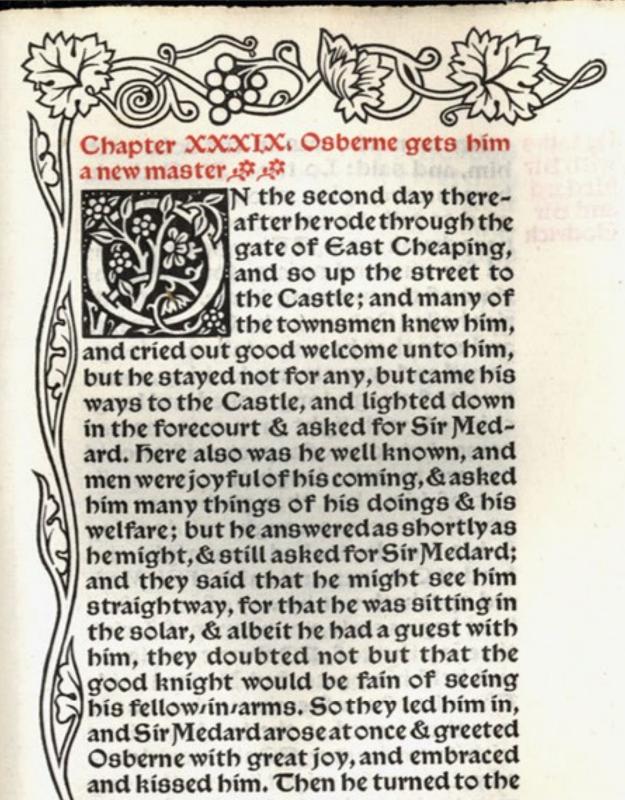
again?

MOT not, said Osberne; Iam in the hands of Meird, to wend as she will have me: but I will tell thee that I have hoped and prayed that it might be in no longer space than five years; then shall I be of twenty years & three, & she but a few weeks young, er, and manhood and womanhood and due service of the kindred shall lie before us both if I find her alive; but if I find her dead, or have sure witness that

so she is, that moment shall I turn my face and come back to you, to live and diewith youas I may. There is the third

thing left, to wit, that I may wander at bout the world and find her not till I am exceeding old; but even then shall I come back with her, or the memory of her. Now I will not say remember me, for therein I trust thee, but I will bid thee live hale and merry, that when I see thee again thy face may be as little changed as may be Therewith they parted, and Osberne looked not back again.

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Medard and Sir Godrick

he talks other man who was in the solar with with Sir him, and said: Lo thou, Sir Godrick, here is a champion whom thou wilt be glad to talk to, meseemeth, when we have drunk a cup & Therewith he called for wine and spices, for it was the time of the morning bever. Sir Godrick hailed Osberne, who looked on him and saw that he was a tall man, longarmed and very strong looking, a man swart of visage, long, nosed and long, chinned, with light grey eyes; he was somewhat sober of aspect, as if it would be hard to get a laugh or even a smile out of him; but though he was not goodly there was nought evil looking in his face. He looked downright and hard at Osberne, and said: If Sir Med, ard speaketh not by way of jest, thou hast begun early, young man, & I wish thee joy thereof Osberne reddened and held his peace; but Medard said: There be of our formen no few, who if ever they jested at the lad have done withitnow for ever & Osberne reddened yet more if it might be; but the long man took him by the hand and spake

kindly to him, & said: Be not troubled Osberne atalightword of mine; at the first thou seeks addidst seem so young and fair that it venture was not easy to think of thee grim amongst the edges; but many aman lies bid within himself.

now they were served of the wine, and Sir Medard spake to Osberne: Well, Dalesman, thou art come amongst us again, grown in manliness, as was like to be. Now if thou be come but to see us and make us merry with thy fellowship, it is well; but if thou have an errand, and would ask something of us, it is better yet, since for sooth we deem that we owe thee somewhat, Said Osberne: Well then, trueitis that I have an errand and crave something, & that is soon told: for I would have thee put mein the way of deeds to do, since I have left the Dale and am seeking adventures @ That will be the least of things to do for thee, my friend, said Medard; and in good time comest thou hither; for though the good town is in all peace and lacks not men, yet here is Sir God,

u

Sir Godrick of Longshaw rick of Longshaw, who is here with me partly for the gathering of men. But good must they be who ride with him, & all without fear, whereas I shall tell thee that he is the hardiest knight and most fearless rider of these days. Now

do ye two talk it over together.

in the face, & ever the more he beheld him the better he liked the looks of his eyes and his visage. So now spake the Knight: how sayest thou, young man? After all I have heard of thee I may well ask thee to be of mine. Only I must tell thee that the work may be both hard and rough; and though there may be somewhat to be won, yet on the other hand the pay may be little more than leave to do the work. Said Osberne: So far as that goes, I am well willing to take my chance of it; but there is one thing which might stand in the way of service with thee. @ What is that? said Sir Godrick Said Osberne: It is in my mind that from henceforth for a while my days should pass in some land that is far

Masterless

hence, that is, from mine own place, & The Wood rather to the south than the north.

Bhere dwelleth thy kindred then? said Godrick In the Dale which is cleft by the Sundering flood, said Osberne, up uni der the great mountains; and I am of the East Dale, else scarce had I been here Well, said the Knight, my chieft est house, which hight Longshaw, lieth a long way south of this; but I shall tell thee that it is no great way from the Sundering flood, but betwixt it & the flood is a great waste & forest. Hs to the flood, it is there, where it runs through this forest which is called the Masterless Wood, amighty greatriver, whereon are barges and cutters & seagoing dromonds even, so that it sunders nought, but joins rather. Nowbesides my house of Longshaw, which is, as it were, the knop and ouch of my manors, I have other houses & strong, holds, some of which be in the very forest itself, and none of them more than a little way thence. for, sooth to say, the said forest is a shield and a

U 2

The city by

refuge to me, and I had been overcome long ago save for its warding. I must tell thee further, that the southernmost skirts of the said forest come down within a score of miles of the great city by the sea which men call the City of the Sundering flood; and that the city folk love the forest little, save they might master it and make it their own, wherein they have failed hitherto. praise be to Allhallows for then were I their very outlaw; whereas now there be others of the knighthood who dwell anigh me who deem that I have the right of it in warding my lands & theirs from these king/ruled chapmen; more by token that the day may come when the folk of their own town, as the guilds of the Lesser Crafts & the husbandmen and simple mariners, may rise against them, deeming them, as the truthis, hard masters & tyrants. Where fore, despite all their mastership, when I will and have occasion thereto, I may ride their streets in safety, for they wot that if they laid a hand on me or mine it would be Bills and bows! bills and

bows up one street & down another. Osberne Wherefore they meddle not with me asks a themselves, but set two or three of the question barons who hold of them on the east side of the Wood Masterless to harry mefrom time to time. Lo thou, lad, now thou knowest not only whereabouts thou mayest go to serve me, but also some deal of the quarrel wherein thou shalt draw sword, if it come to that.

how savest thou?

HIT a while, Sir Knight, said Osberne, and tell me first: if the King of the city overcome thee, will be take from thee that which is thine own of right, or that which thou hast taken from some other? he will take nothing more than my life, said Sir Godrick; but ye may add there to some small matter of the remnants of houses and land which erst my fathers owned, well beloved of all folk. forsooth here and there I hold some tower or strength which I have taken from my foemen, who dared me there, to Good is that, said Osberne; now would I ask of another thing: when

he questions again thou must needs burn men in their house, has it been the wont of thee & thine to let the old men & women and children comeout safe, or to burn them in with the rest? The Knight looked grimly on him, and said: friend of the Dale, if thou comest to be my man, & thou dost such evil deeds as to burn in them that may make no defence, then if thou escapest hanging at my hands thou may st call me thy dastard thence, forward.

more I would ask yet: If those guildsof craft a foresaid should rise up against their King and the tyrants of the Porte, and they sent to thee for help, wouldst thou give them somuch help as not to be against them, but let them fight it out & the mightiest to prevail? Or how much more wouldst thou give? Stood up Sir Godrick therewith & was very wroth. Said he: If these good fellows of the Lesser Crafts rise up against their lords and send tome, then if they have

gotten to them somuch as the littlest of the city gates, or if it be but a dromond on the river, then will I go to them with all mine, & leave house and lands behind, that we may battle it out side by side to live or die together. Or if they may not do so much as that, yet if all or any of them may win outragates&turn their heads towards Long, shaw, then will I ride to meet them with everything that may bear spear or axe, and I will have them bome with me and arm them & clothe them & feed them and house them, and my lands shall be their lands, and bite and drop shall we share together, so long as it holds out: and a noble host shall we gather, and harry the King & his dastards till we prevail at last, and we will have a new rule of the City and a new Porte, & I will be the captain thereof if they will have it so, or else to die in the pain. Now I say this is the least that I shall do. And if any man be so bold as to tell me to my face that I will do less. I say that he lies in his throat; and that shall I prove on him, body to body.

The Knight will befriend the Lesser Crafts

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Osberne questions again and he said: There, there here is no champion so hardy as to gainsay thee; for I know thee well, old friend, that thou art preux above all men. Hnd as for the Dalesman, look on him & see how his eyes are glitter-ingand his cheeks flushing. Trust me, thou shalt have a man after thine own heart, young though he be.

sed his hand over his brow, and he smiled a little, and said: Well, thou of the East Dale, hast thou perchance yet another question to ask? formeseems for a man who would take wages of me thou hast already asked

wroth, but one more question have I to ask. And as to my wages, let that be; for to ask these questions, and to have them thus answered, is better than wages to me. But now this is verily my last question. That Masterless Mood which thou hast said is a shield & refuge to thee,

is it not also a refuge for rufflers and Thestrong, runagates and strong, thieves? & what thieves of dost thou do in dealing with such illdoers?

the Wood Masterless

Sir Godrick spake quietly and said: My lad, true it is that there is a sort of folk who haunt the said wood and live by taking from others, but thou shalt wot that they do but little harm to husbandmen and other poor folk, because such have little to be robbed of. And forsooth many of those from whom they rob are worthy to lose that which they have gotten from poor folk by fraud and covin, & may as duly be called thieves as those that waylay them. Neverthelesswesuffernotthesaidrunagatesto live and rob wholly in peace; and if we take them, they have the choice of a high gallows or somewhat hard service under my captains. Nay, if it be proven of them that they have been murderous & cruel, they may not forego the dance in theair, even as I said afore. Now then, deemest thou meso evilalord? or dost thou deem thee meet for nought save

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Osberne swears fealty to the lord of Longshaw the host of heaven and to be a sergeant of the blessed Michael himself? may be help and save us!

HID Osberne: That may come to pass, lord, one day, but mean-while I pray thee receive meas thy man, and thou shalt find that I am not so ill at obeying a commandment as ye

may deem.

ND therewith he knelt before the Knight and put his hands between his hands, and swore

by Allhallows to be true to him.

ed, & said to Sir Medard: hath hedoneaughthitherto for which I might dub him a knight? Many deeds, said Sir Medard, hath he done whereby he might be made a knight; but he will not have it because his kindred are not & were not of the knight, hood, albeit men of honour.

matters let each man go his own way, so let it be as it will; yet some name shall I give him that he may be known by it. And lo thou, he is

clad all in red, & ruddy of countenance Osberne is is he, and his sprouting beard shall be called the red when it hath grown greater, though Red Lad his hair is yellow and shiny as glass. Whereforenow I shall call him the Red Lad; and by that name meseemeth he shall be known far and wide.

BIREN they laughed all three, & the two knights drank, both of them, to the Red Lad, and Osberne pledged them and thanked them in turn. And well content was he with the way that things had gone.

Chapter XL. Osberne rides with Sir

SBERNE tarried at East Cheaping for half a month while Sir Godrick was doing his business, which was, in short, gathering good men for

his fellowship; at the end of that time he had gotten him one score and five besides Osberne, of whom a half score were well known to Osberne from the war of Deepdale: and he was fain of





They take leave of Sir Medard Tlast they departed, & Sir Mediard tooka kindleave of Osberne. And Sir Godrick rode oftenest beside the Red Lad & talked much with him. They had a let pass through the lands of the Baron of Deepdale, but bewould not suffer Sir Godrick to take any men from his country. So they came to Deepham, which was the Baron's chief town, in a very fair & fertile dale, well watered. And there was nought for it but the Baron would see the Red Lad, for Sir Godrick must needs speak of him to the lord; and it must be said that there was now no enmity between the Baron and East Cheaping. So the Baron feasted them well amongst his folk in his great hall; and when he saw Osberne be knew him, & had been told as aforesaid that the Red Lad had been at the carrying him away from the midst of his warriors; but the Baron hailed him merrily, and cried out to Sir Godrick: Sir Knight, if thou wouldst have any manistealing done thou art in the luck of it, for this youngling is a past, master in the craft. And before the

feast was over he sent for Osberne to They leave talk to him, & asked many things con- Deepham cerning the war as Osberne sawit from his side; and he showed that he owed him no grudge for the stealing, for he gave Osberne gifts, a fair gown of crim, son cloth of gold and a ruby ring. So all went well: nevertheless Osberne was nought loth to leave Deepham, and thought it not ill that his life lay not overmigh to the lord thereof.

of Deepdale they turned away toward the south, and rode two days through a fair country and peacer ful, of much tillage, besprinkled with goodly thorpes, where they had entertainment for their money & none seemed to fear them; and there they sawno meniatiarms, and but few carles that bore any weapon save whittle or boarspear. At the end of that land they came to a good town walled and warded; and there none hindered them, for the Knight had acquaintance with the capi tain of the Porte, who had gathered him a half dozen of stout carles, and

They are welcomed at a stead in the pasture land

there they rested three days. Thence they rode one day amidst the same fair country, & then entered a forest through which was a way which led them a little west of south. The said forest gave out in three days, and then they came into a wide valley watered by a fair river running due west. The said valley was more for pasture than tillage, so that it was not thickly housed, albeit when they had crossed the river they came on to a big stead of many houses (and it was evening) much peopled, and the folk, who had seen their riding, were standing with weapons outside the houses. But when Sir Godrick had rid, den forward & given out his name and his errand, to wit, that he was riding to Longshaw with some good fellows who were fain to be of his folk, they all cried out a fair welcome to him & his; for they knew of his deeds & his fame, and were well-willers to him, and were fain of seeing him this first time. Then stood forthan old long/hoary man, but tall and stark, & gave himself out for the master of the stead, which hight

River/lease, and he named him David, Old David and said: Sir Knight, Lam father often offers help of these men and the grandsire of one score and five, and other good fellows I have with me to the tale of ten score and ten, and all these thou wilt make merry by thy presence here tomight. @So he brought the Knight and his into the hall, and fair greeting he gave them; and to Osberne, though the land were other and the houses far bigger, for this David was as it were a king of the meadows, it was almost as if he were back at Wethermel, so yeomanly and freeseemed all about him. And the folk were a fair folk, the women goodly and the men free and bold. So all men were merry & thought but little of the morrow. But ere the feast was over the old David spake to the good Knight & said: Sir Godrick, meseems thoushalt have many a foeman on thy back these coming seasons, wherefore if any of my grandsons or the swains here have a longing to ride with thee and become thy men, I will spare them to thee to thenumber of a half score. how say ye,

bids them farewell

Theoldman lads, cried he down the hall, be there any here who desire to see how the lord of Longshaw arrayeth his battles, and would bring back some fair stories to the maidens' ears? Now it was soon seen that no few there were that would be fain to ride with the Knight, who soon had his choice of ten tall men, stout, and deft in weapons, & the end of the feast was merrier than the beginning.

EXT morning they were away arly, and the old man led them out over his meadows, which were exceeding rich of neat and sheep; and at parting he said: fair Knight of Longshaw, I have gone as far as I may this day, & must turn again; but this I say to thee, if ever the world goes amiss with thee, as it yet may for all thy valiancy, or for sooth because of it, come hither to me, or if I be dead, to mysons and my grandsons, and abide here as merrily as thou mayst. And spare not to bring whomso of thine thou wilt, as may be this goodly young, linghere, layinghis hand on Osberne's shoulder, of whom some of thy men were telling tales to some of mine last night. And now I bid farewell to thee and thine.

They pass through the down country

Sir Godrick and his went their ways, & the new fellows led them by the shortest road when they knew whither Sir Godrick had will to wend. And when they were out of that valley they came up on to the down country, which ran along the edge of the plain like a wall; and thereby they went due south for three days, seeing but few folk and no houses, save here and there the cot of a shepherd, & that often builded on a wain. The three days ended, they come on a dale in the downs where a little river cleft them, running about south, west, and by the rede of their shepherd fellows they turned & followed it out of the down country. and were presently in a land of mingled tillage&pasture, well builded, but more with single homesteads than thorpes, though these were not lacking: albeit the folk of them were not very free with their guesting, but yet for money, and

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to a churlish town

They come as if half compelled, they yielded up such good as the riders would have of them. The next day, riding the samelike country, they saw on a bent a fair town with white walls, & many goodly gables&slim spires rising above them. But when they drew nigh thereto, an hour before sunset, they found that the said walls were of other uses than to be looked at, to wit, to keep them out of their night's lodging; for the gates were shut, & there were spears and basi nets glittering over the battlements. So Sir Godrick rode forward toward the gate, taking Osberne & a trumpet with him, and there bade blow a point of peace and crave speech of the captain of the guard. Then stood upatall man on the gate, armed at all points in white armour, and by him were two or three meniatiarms & one with a crossbowready bent. Cried out the tall man: Go ye, trumpet and all, and let us see the last of you! for we know you, outlaws of Longshaw. The better luck for you if we come not to your house speed, ily. Go ye, make ready for us 1 & Sir 306

Godrick burst out a laughing & turn- Osberne ed his horse's head; but even therewith Osberne, who was exceeding keen, sighted, saw the cross/bowman raise his engine; but the Red Lad had his Dwarf, wrought bow bended in his hand, so that ere the cross/bow stock came to the man's shoulderhe fell clati tering down with a shaft through his throat, & Osberne rode back speedily after his lord with a half dozen shafts and quarrels whistling about him, but none touched him, and great was the cry & the yell that came from the town gate.

bends his Dwarfwrought bow

when Osberne was with his captain again, that one spake to bim & said: Red Lad, Red Lad, a sharp shaft is somewhat of a fierce answer to a rough word. Next time let them shoot ere ye shoot @ Nay, lord, said Osberne, had I waited this time thou mightest have come by a knock from yonder carle's quarrel #Hnd he told him what he had seen. Then said Sir Godrick: Then am I wrong & thou right, and I thank thee for the shaft.

x 2

307

five days through rough ways Imighthaveknown that thou wouldst be wise.

O they fetched a compass about that surly town, and rode a two hours ere they took harbour in a little wood, and held good watch and ward all that night; but none meddled with them.

he dayafter, by the rede of the shepherd folk, they turned up into the hills again, for they had no wish to raise the country against them; and, to say sooth, Sir Godrick was somewhat pensive that he found enmity so far off his own land. So they rode the hills for five days, falling in with few folk, & going slowly because of the rough ways. Thereafter they needed victual, & had been fain of better lodging might they get it; & whereas they saw a fair plain well builded and tilled, with good roads through the same, and knew that this was the nighest way to the Wood Masterless, they turned down thither at all adventure, and found no evil haps there, but that the folk were well enough pleased to

make their market of the riders, & had They come neither fear of them nor harboured en, to a castle mity against them. Thus then they on a hill rode for two days, and at the end of the second day entered a good cheapingtown, unfenced save by timber pales. There they abode a whole day, yet warily, since, though there were no waged meniatiarms in the stead, there went about many stout carles, who all bore long whittles, and looked as if their bills and bows had not been far to seek. But no strife betid.

Chapter XLL. They joust with the Knight of the fish **



BENCE THEY rode through the fields & the thorpes two days, and on the third day in the morn, ing they saw a fair white castle on a hill, & on the

plain underneathalittle plump of men, atrarms under a banner. So the Knight arrayed his folk & went forward warily, although that folk seemed to be not above a score; for he knew not what



of the fish

The Knight might be behind them; and they were hard on the baily of the said castle. But when they were come within half a bow/shot, and Osberne could see the banner that it bore two silver fish addorsed on a blue ground, a herald prick ed forth from the castle folk, & when he drewnigh to Sir Godrick and his he said: If I knew which were the captain of the riders I would give him the greet, ing of my lord, Sir Raynold fisher of the Castle of the fish & here then is the captain, said Sir Godrick; what would Sir Raynold with him? This, said the herald, that whensoever my lord seeth the riding of any weaponed men overa half score by tale, they must tarryand joust with him, two of theirs against two of his, and must run with sharp spears of war till one side is over, thrown or sorely hurt. This is the cus, tom of the Castle of the fish, & hath been these hundred years. Wherefore now declare thy name, Sir Knight This is an evil custom, said Sir Godrick, and sorts but little with mine errand, for I have over much bitter earn-

est on hand to playat battle. Butsince Sir Godrick thy lord besetteth the way I must is wroth needs defend myself against him, as I would against any other ruffler or strong, thief. Go tell him that the Knight of the Weary, Strife will come presently with a good man of his and deliver him of his jousts @ And Sir

Godrick was very wroth.

omen the herald was gone Sir Godrick turned to Osberne & said: how sayest thou, Red Lad, is this any of thy business? Allofmy business, lord, said Osberne, albeit I am none so wroth as thou art. @Said the Knight, looking on him kindly: Thouart not bound to run, Red Lad; the sharp spear is an unhappy beast, and these men are doubtless of the deftest & Said Osberne: It all comes in the day's work, lord; I pray thee turn menot back & Well, doweon our basnets and make we speedy end of it, quoth Sir Godrick; a wise man must ever wait upon a fool's pleasure.

They break spears

O the two of them went forth, & found the others ready over against them, the Knight of the fish against Sir Godrick, & avery tall, stark maniatiarms against Osberne. Short is the story of this course; for Sir Godrick and the fish brake their spears, but in such wise that the Castler knight lost his stirrups, &it went but a little but that he fell to field @ Hs for Osberne, he played so warily that he set his spear, point in the default of the long man's defence just where arm joins shoulder, and the spear went through and through him, and he fell to the earth most grievously hurt Therewith Osberne, who must needs let his spear fall, took a short axe from his saddle, bow, for he would not draw Board cleaver, and abode what was todo. But the Knight of the fish cried out for fresh spears for him and Sir Godrick, & must needs run again, and this time the knight's spear brake on Sir Godrick, whose shaft held that he drave the Knight of the fish clean over the arson of his saddle, and but for the

goodness of his shield & double jaze- The Knight rant the spear, head had been in his bids them breast withal.

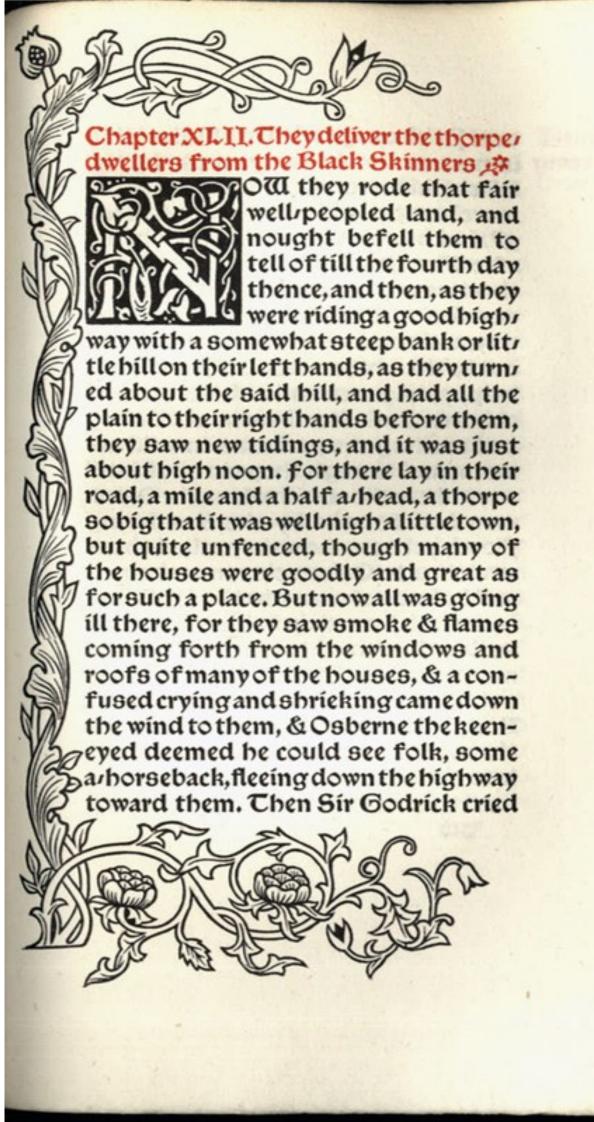
all drink a cup

THEN Sir Godrick cast up his spear, head, & lifted the visor of his basnet and looked around, and saw Osberne sitting still upon his horse and the long man in the arms of his fellows, and he cried out: Now this comes of fools! here is our journey tarried, & one man or two, who be not of our foes, slain or sore burt, and all fornought. Hoye, give my man hisspear. And thou, Red Lad, come ar way before they make us do more hurt.

Wall therewith the Knight of the fish sat up and had come to his wit, and laughed and said: here isasurly one! Why, thou might st com, plain more if ye had come to the worse, as we have. Come now, all the sort of you, intomy house, & drink a cup with us for the washing away of all grudge against the honourable custom of the fish Sir Godrick shook his head, but the wrath ran off him and he said: Sir Knight, thou art debonair in thy

The Knight's champion goes along with them

folly, and I thank thee; this thy bidding might we have taken with a good will hadst thou not compelled us to wasteourtime in knocking you off your horses. And I am sorry we have burt thy champion, and well I hope that he will be clean healed Dost thou? said heof the fish; now I will tell thee that if he be healed, I will send him on to thee to be thy man, that is if he will go. for well I know thee that thou art the lord of Longshaw: & as to my champion, he will suit thee to a turn, for he is wellinighas surly as thou, and as stiff in stour as may be Freeat all laughed, and they bade each other farewell, & so departed with good will. So they rodeon, & nought more befell that day, & they guested in a fair thorpe in good enough welcome.



They meet

out: Prick on, good men of mine! this folk fleeing is no case for tarrying, these be the Black Skinners, and if we make not the more haste all will be under fire & steel. #Hnd he spurred withal, & Osberne afterhim. But now as they drewnigher there was no navisaving but that folk were fleeing desperately along the high way, and some with their hands spread out to the newcomers as if praying for help, young men and old, women and children; and after them came howling and smiting mentatrarms in wild armour, and though they were not in all ways like to those with whom the Dales, men had fought by the Sundering flood, yet somehow they called those wretches to Osberne's remembrance, and he knewat once what had befallen. and wrath flamed up in his heart, for it wellmigh seemed to him as if Elfhild must have been borne off again. And he unknit the peace strings from about Board/cleaver, and drew him forth, so that a clear humming noise went forth into the sunlit air, and spurred on so bard that he outwent every man there.

UT when the Skinners saw those The Knight riders coming on, they stayed comes to the chase, and some few tarried their help while they shot from their short bows. which did but little harm, and so they hustled back into the thorpe; & some few, the first of them, gat through and off into the fields; but the fleers drew aside to the right hand & the left, calling blessings on the good Knight & his, and, when the torrent of them was past, followed after timidly toward their wasted dwelling. And as Sir God, rick & his came within the thorpe they found a many of the Skinners there (two hundreds of their carcasses were buried afterwards), and all about by the houses lay mangled bodies of the country/folk, some few with weapons in their hands, but more of women & children. But when Godrick & his had slain the first plump that they had driven in from the road, the Knight cried out: Ye thorperdwellers, look to quenching the fires, while we slay you these wolf swine & Thereon the count trymen began to run together with

The thorper to quenching the fires

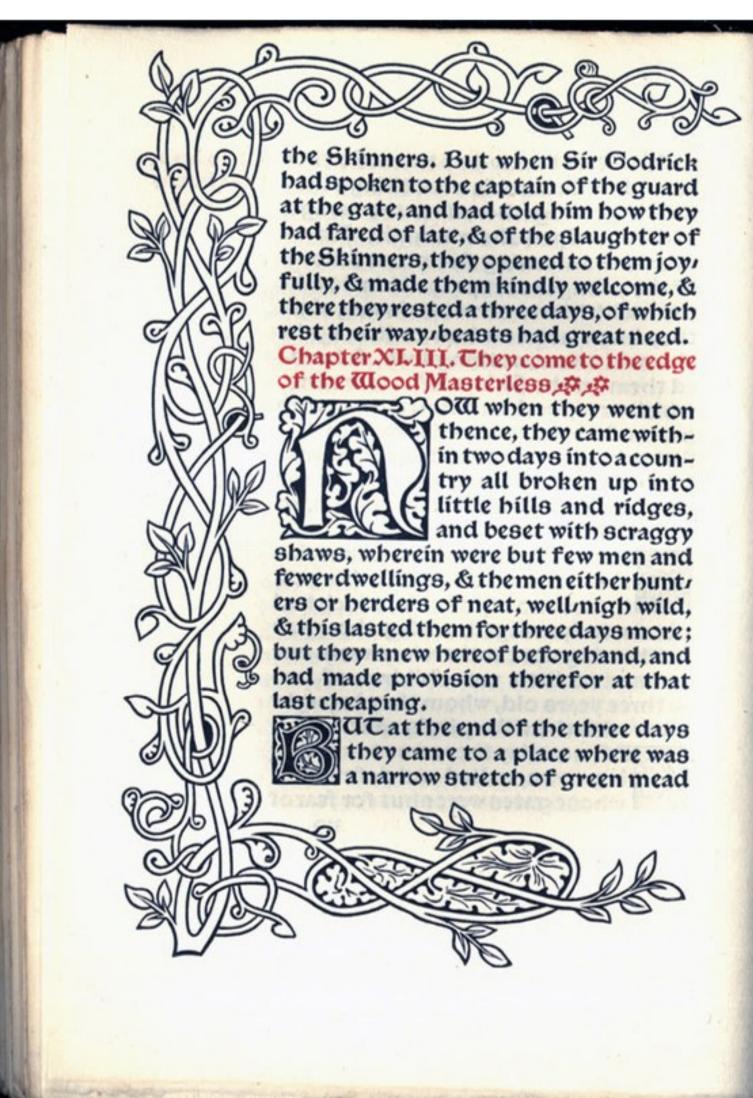
buckets wherever the riders were before dwellers set them. And there was a pretty stream running down the midmost of the street, and though it were dyed with blood that day, it was no worse for the quenching of the flames. Meanwhile Sir Godrick and his set themselves to the work, and it was not right perilous, for the thieves were all about scattermeal in twos and threes, and most afoot robbing and murdering and fireraising, so that they made but such defence, when they made any, as the rat makes to the terrier. Shortly to say it. in half an hour there was not one of them left alive, save some few who gat to their horses and fled, having cast away their weapons and armour. Then the riders turned to help the thorpedwellers in quenching their fires, & in some two hours they had got all under wherein was any hope, & the rest they must let burn away.

BEN MOULD Sir Godrick have gone his ways, but the poor folk of the thorpe prayed him so piteously to abide till the morrow that he

had no heart to nay say them. So they They leave brought him and his what things they the thorpe might get together after the ravage, and begrudged them nought. Moreover in the morning five stout fellows of the younger sort prayed him to take them with him to serve him in war, since they knew not now how to live; so he yearsaid them, nothing loth, & horsed them on the Skinners' way beasts, which were good, and armed them with such of their armour as was not too filthy for decent men to use. The rest of the horses and gear they left to the thorpe, abiders, to better their hard case withal.

Othey departed, & that same day they came on two other thorpes, but not so big as this, which had been utterly ravaged, so that there was neither dog nor cat therein, save in one house two little menichildren of two & three years old, whom they brought away with them for pity's sake.

he next day they came to a cheap, ing/town, walled and defensible, whose gates were shut for fear of



and a few acres in the wilderness, and The banner a little river ran through all that, and of the White above it on a height, steep & wellmigh sheeronall sides save one, was a castle paled high and strong, & as they drew nigh thereto Osberne saw a banner thrust out from the highest tower, and the Knight said to him: Red Lad, whose banner is that? I wot not, said Osberne Canst thou see the blazon of it? said Sir Godrick @ Yea, said the other; it bath a White Bart collared and chained with gold, and emparked on a green ground Sooth is that, said Sir Godrick. Nowlook behind the eover thy shoulder DEven so did Osberne, & saw a banner borne by one of theirs, and the selfsame blazon on it; and now be called to mind that never erst had heseenSirGodrick's banner displayed. And he laughed and wondered, & was some little deal abashed, and he said: Lord, is this Longshaw? Laughed the Knight in his turn, and said: What, thou deemest this no very lordly castle for him who bath to withstand barons and portes and kings? Nay lad,

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Dart im-

They are welcomedat Woodneb

look again, & tell meif thou seest the Long Shaw; this is called Moodneb, and therein is a captain of mine who hight Edward the Brown, and therein shall we rest awhile ere we enter the Mood Masterless. And hence onward to the Long Shawisa twelve days' jour, ney if all go well.

he was the better content, for in good sooth that desert/hold seemed all too strait to keep within its walls the valiancy of Sir Godrick and his host.

thrown open, and folk gaily clad & armed came forth to meet their lord and his new men, and before them went Edward the Brown, a short thick man, but very sturdy looking, his hair cut short to his head; small brown eyes had he & short nose, so that he looked somewhat like to a bear; but a valiant man he was, and a trusty.

tainment, as men who were at home again, & they abode there

seven days ere they departed, and had good disport of hunting and hawking; and there was much minstrelsy & tale, telling in the hallamights: & there must Osberne tell what stories he knew of the war of East Cheaping & the matters of the Dale, both the tidings of his own day and of the days of his fathers; & there with were men well con-

Tales told of the Skin, ners

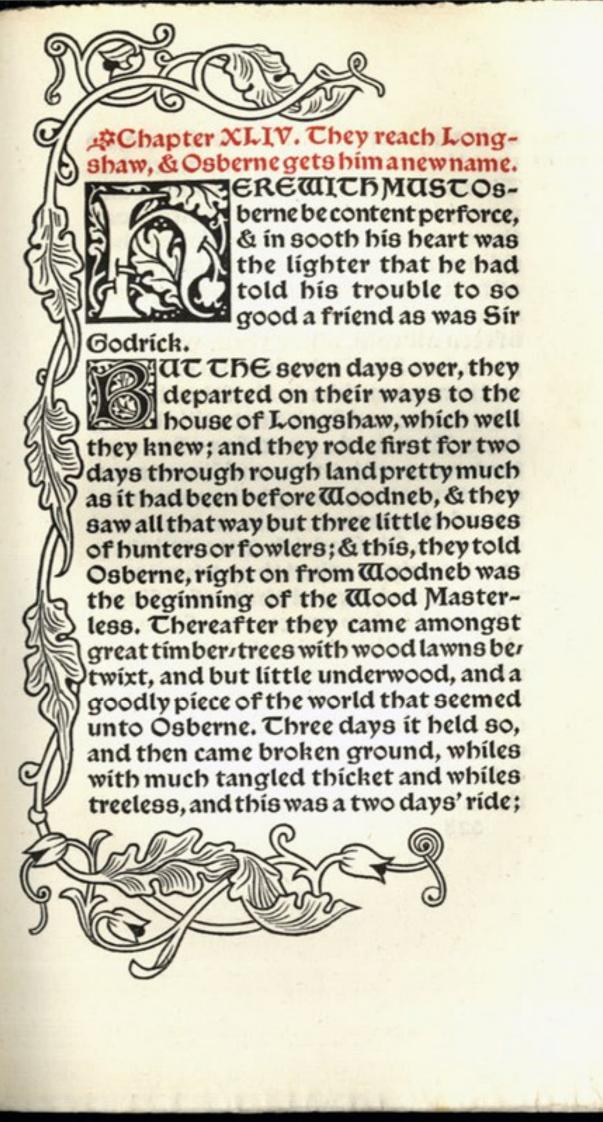
tent, for a good tale teller he was. Sir O little also he talked with Sir Godrick, & especially on one mate ter; for his mind dwelt much on those same Skinners whom they had overthrown, & he kept weighing them against those evil aliens with whom he had fought across the Sundering flood, and who, he deemed full surely, had borne away Elfhild. And on a day heasked Sir Godrick concerning it, &if these two sorts of wretches had aught to do with it; and he told him all the story of that battle, and what like his foemen were in body and array, and of their horses and armourand weapons, and of their shrieks and the gibbering of their Latin. Then said Sir Godrick: I

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It is the countryfolk so name them will tell thee what meseemeth of thy foer men of that day, that they be of the kin, dred of these Black Skinners though of another tribe, so that men call them the Red Skinners, though ye shall knowthatneithertheRednortheBlack call themselves Skinners, which is but aname of terror which the country folk have fixed on them for their evil deeds. Now further, although the Red Skinners be worse than any men else, they are not so bad as the Black. That is, they are more like men and less like wolves standing upright: to wit, they waste not and destroy not everything forthright, but keep it to make some gain thereof. As for example, they slay not and rip not up all their captives whatsoever they may be, but keep such as they may deem likely to sell to the thrall cheapers. Nowas to thy foes ber ing of this ill folk, I deem it more like the more I think thereof, for not only hast thou given me a true picture of their aspect, but it is mostly the other side of the Sundering flood which they baunt, though whiles we meet them

about the borders of the Wood Mas- The Red terless nigh unto the flood. Withal I Lad tells must tell thee, that though I speak of his tale both the Black and the Red Skinners as of nations or tribes, I say not but they be mingled with runagates of divers folks: for whatever is worst or evillest or cruellest will drift toward them. And I wot not but that these men be worse than they of the blood, having in them more malice & grudging. Butthis I know for sure, that these are they who set them to work on such a business, and spy for them, and sell them their plunder, as they may well do since they are of aspect like other folk & know their tongues. But what aileth thee, Red Lad, to look so wan & so perturbed of countenance? hast thou aught on thine heart which thou wouldst tell me? @ That have I, said Osberne: and so as shortly as he might he told his lord the whole tale of his dealings with Elfhild, and how she had vanished away before hand might touch hand, or face face; and how he deemed that she had been borne off by

Sir Godrick bids him take heart these same Red Skinners. And when he had done Sir Godrick said: Poor lad, and this was the cause then that made thee so eager to take service along with mel Well, thou hast done wisely; for first, thou hast got thee a faithful friend; & next, if thou never amendest itnorsettest eyes on the maiden again, yet surely the doing of deeds shall ease thy sorrow, till at last it shall be scarce a sorrow to thee, but a tale of the past. And, moreover, in coming to my house thou shalt have come to the only place where thou mayst perchance happen on tidings of her, since with thesemen we have to do, and also at whiles with those who deal with them by way of chaffer. And if we fall in with any of the Red ones, thou shalt make what captives thou wilt, & for the saving of their lives they may tell thee somewhat to further thy search. Foldup thine head then I for surely even now thou art doing all that thou mayst in the matter.



They come upon a com, pany of chapmen

and many were the wild deer therein, so that their cheer was greatly amended. Thereafter was the wood thinner and more plain, and there was a clear road through it; and on the first day of their riding this way they came upon a sort of folk who were sitting on the greensward eating their dinner. They were fifteen all told, all of them with weapons, but Sir Godrick & his came upon them so suddenly that they had no time to rise and flee, so sat still abiding haps. They had a good few of sumpter/horses with them, and it was soon clear to see that, though they were wear poned, they were not men, atarms, but chapmen. Sir Godrick entreated them courteously, & asked them whence and whither, and prayed them of tidings. They said they were come from the City of the Sundering flood, and had riddenthe Woodinstead of taking ship on the river, which was far safer, because they were bound for some of the cheaping towns to which Sir Godrick & his had given the gorby. They said that all was at peace in the City and the

frank thereof, and there was little of Sir Godrick strife anywhere anigh. In the end they asks them bade the Knight and his men sit with for news them and share their feast under the green/wood tree. Sir Godrick yea/said that with a good will, and they were presently all very merry. Sooth to say, though they made as if they knew him not, and never named his name, they

knewhimwell enough, and were a little afeard of him, and only too well content if he named himself not, for they were of the guilds who were scarce good friends with Longshaw; so that it had been little more than a fair deed of war if he had made them unbuckle and open. When dinner was over and they were drinking a cup, he called three of the wisest of them apart along with Osberne, and asked them straightway if they knew of any fair maid who had been bought of late by any chapman from the Red Skinners, and he bade Osberne tell closely what like was Elfi hild: even so he did, sore abashed the while. But when he was done, the chap,

men laid their heads together, & asked 329

of Longshaw

The castle one or two others of their company, but could give no tidings of any such.

therewith they parted, & Sir Godrick and his rode the wood, which was diverse of kind, for six days more; and at last, on a bright sunny afternoon, when after riding a plain not much bertimbered they had made their way through a thick & close wood for some five hours, they came out of the said wood on to a plain of greensward cleft by a fair river, which winded about the foot of a long low ridge where were orchards & gardens a many, and all above them so many buildings and towers & walls of stone. that to Osberne it seemed as if they had before them a very fair town. But even therewith all the company by Sir Godrick's bidding stayed, & drew up in a line, & the banner of the Bart impaled was displayed; and Sir Godrick spake to Osberne & said: Lo, Red Lad, my house of Longshaw, & this is the Shawwhich we have comethrough: now how likest thou the house? Watt, & exceeding well, said Osberne; it is as a town & Yea, said Sir Godrick; & there It was build fore if I can but keep it well victualled. and have with me a host big enough of stout men, it shall never be taken Now Osberne looked again, and he saw that midmost of the towers and walls was a very great hall exceeding fair. with lovely pinnacles and spires and windows like to carven ivory, and beside it a church fairer yet; and then ber fore it and lower down the hill and on either side were huge towers, stern and stout, all without fretwork or ornament; and there were many of these, and one to help the other, all about the hill, and down by the river/side a baily suchasneverwas astronger or a wiser. And Sir Godrick said: See thou, lad, those fair and beauteous buildings in themidst, they were the work of peace, when we sat well beloved on our own lands: it is an hundred of years ago since they were done. Then came the beginning of strife, and needs must we build yonder stark and grim towers and walls in little leisure by the labour of many hands. Now may peace come

ed in time ofpeaceand time of war

in the hall

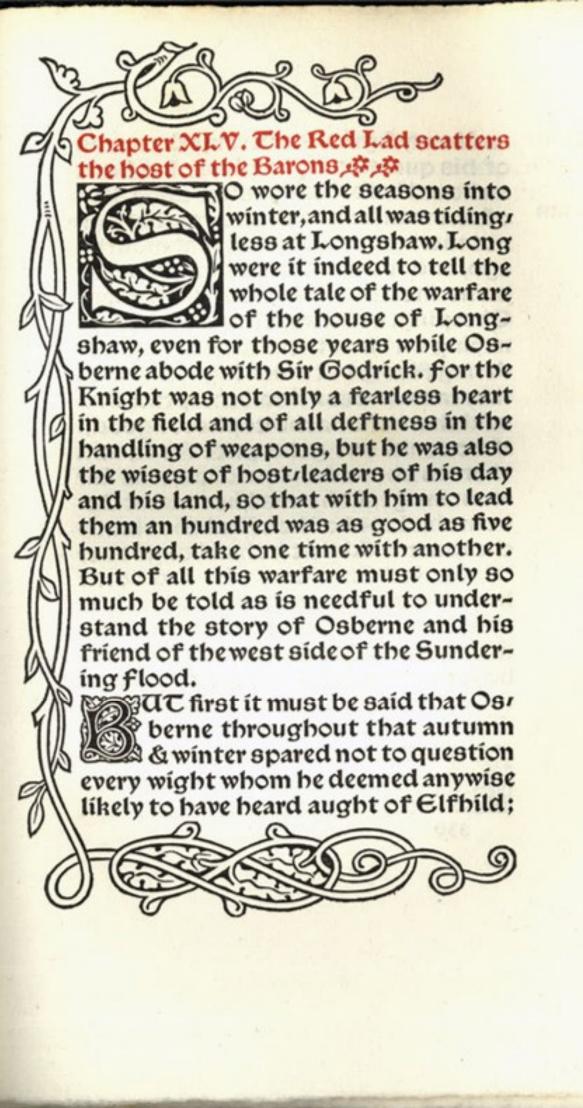
high feast again, and give us time to cast wreaths and garlands of fretwork round the sternness of the war, walls, or let them abide & crumble in their due time. But little avails to talk of peace as now. Comethou, Red Lad, & join the host of war that dwelleth within those walls, even as peaceful craftsmen and chapmen dwell in a good town. Lo thou, they fling abroad the White Bart from the topmost tower: Blow music and salute it.

BEN all their horns blew up, and they set forward toward the baily of the castle. And it is said indeed that five thousand mentatrarms. besides the women and other folk that waited on them, dwelt for the most part in the house of Longshaw.

O that even was high feast holden in the great hall of Longshaw, where by Osberne's deeming all was fairer & daintier within even than without. There was the Red Ladshown to a good place and all honour done to him, and his lord looked to it that the tales of his valiancy should be known, so that all thought well of him. There was but little doing in those months which followed the homercoming of Sir Godrick, as he was at peace with his neighbours so to say. But hemade Osberne captain over a band of good men, and sent him on divers errands wherein was some little peril; and in all of these he did wisely and sped well. Amongst others he went with ten tens of men through the Wood and right down to a certain haven on the Sunder, ing flood, with the errand of warding chapmen and others who were bringing many loads of wares for the service of the house. There then he beheld the great water for the first time since he had left the Dale, & wondered at its hugeness & majesty; and the sorrow of his heart stirred within him when he thought how far they two had come from the Bight of the Cloven Knoll, he and the Sundering flood. But he had no leisure to grieve over much, and his grief was but as the pain of a hurt which a man feels even amidst of his deepsleep.Of those chapmen & others

Osberne goes to the flood on an errand slain

Certainam- he asked much concerning Elfhild; & bushers are they could tell him many tales of the Red Skinners and their misdeeds, but nought that seemed to have aught to do with his love. On the way back with the train of goods, which was great and long/spun/out, aband of the waylayers laid an ambushment against it, hearing that the leader of its guard was but a young man new to war. But they were best to have left it alone, for Osbernewas well ware of them; and to be short, he soambushed the ambushers that he had them in the trap, and slew them every one: small harm it was of the death of them. Now this was the first time in his warfare that his men fell on with the name of him in their mouths, and cried: The Red Lad! the Red Lad! Terrible indeed became that cry in no very long time.



The Red Lad questions a chapman

and heavy & grievous became the words of his questioning, and ever his heart sickened before the answer came. But of one man be gat an answer that was not mere nay say, to wit, that months ago, and it must have been when Osberne first met Sir Godrick at East Cheaping, he & two fellows were journeying on the other side of the Sundering flood, but much higher up, and they came across a thrall cheapener who said that he had a choice piece of goods if he could but get a price for it, and thereon showed them a damsel as fair as an image. Eshe was like to what Os, berne had told of her. And the thrallcheapener said that he had bought her of the Red Skinners, who had borne her off from a country/side far and far away, but somewhere anigh the Sundering flood. That man said that they bought her not of the carle, whereas the price was high and it was not much in their way of business.

after Yule, & the chapman who told it was going back again

presently through the Mood & across Osberne the flood, since the season was mild; crosses the and Osberne asked would be take him flood with him, in case he might hit upon anything in those parts. The chapman was nought loth, as may be deemed, to have such a doughty champion to his fellow farer; so Osberne asked leave of his lord, who would not gainsay him since nought was stirring, but bade him take three good men of his friends with him. So they went, & crossed the flood a few days before Candlemass; and when they were on the other side they fell to asking questions at the houses of religion and of the chapmen whom they met there. Hlso they gat them into castles & great houses where many servants are wont to be, and not a few bought at a price; and there they used both tongue & eyes. Thus fared they a twenty days' journey up the water, keeping ever somewhat nigh; but woe worth, if they gat them no great scathe, though they had some rough passages for sooth, which time suffer, eth us not to tell of, yet also they gat

News of the no good, and were no nearer to hearing Barons a true word of Elfhild than ever.

Oback comes Osberne, cast down and somewhat moody; but time wears on, and he is busy over his lord's errands at this place and that until a year is sped; and nowcome tidings that drive all other things out of his head for a while. It was a little after Marymass that he comes home to Longshaw, whence some business had taken him a three days' journey through the Wood, and straightway he hears tell how war, and big war, has arisen. for the Barons who lay mostly to the east and north of Longshaw, though some help they had from the west and the south, both hated Sir Godrick sorely because he withheld them from the worst deeds of tyranny, and also, though they owed not service to the King of the great City or the Porte thereof, yet were they somewhat under their power. These then had met together and made a great league, & had sworn the undoing of Sir Godrick & the house of Longshaw for ever. And all the world knew that they were but Sir Godrick the catspaw of the King of the City & the tyrannous Porte, though neither berne on an of these would let themselves be seen therein.

sends Oserrand

Codrick sends for Osberne, and talks long with him, and the end of that talk is that he sends him on the errand to go seek the hostingofthem of the Barons' League who dwelt furthest north, & to fall on them as fast and as fierce as he may, so as to break up the said hosting, so that he may not have these men on his flank when be marches against the main host, which he will do with all speed. All of which he deems may be done, because he wotteth that the Barons deem of him that he will abide their coming to Longshaw, and that when they have shut him up there they shall then have theopen help of all the strength of the King and the Porte.

WOM Osberne heard and understood all, and the men are all ready for him, a thousand and three hundred by tale; so he makes no

The Red delay, and leads them by ways unken-Lad joins ned so diligently that he breaks forth the battle on them before they be duly ordered, though they be all out in the fields drawing together. Shortly to say it, his thirteen hundred men are more by a great deal than their six thousand, and they scatter them to the winds so that they can never come together again, & all their munitions of war and matters for feeding & wending are destroyed. Then turns the Red Lad and wendeth, not back again to Longshaw, but thither whereas he wots the great battle shall be, and on the very eve thereof he rideth into Sir Godrick's camp; and such an outcry of joy there was when he bears in the taken banners & such spoil as was not over heavy to ride with, as that noman there was of Sir Godrick's but he knew full surely that the victory would be theirs on the morrow. Hs for Osberne, all men praised him, and the good Knight embraced him before all the host and the leaders thereof, and said: Here is one shall lead you when I am slain DEven soit went. Of a sooth

are routed

stiff was the stour, for the Barons and The Barons theirs were hardy men and of great prowess, and were three to Sir Godrick's one. But they knew that they should not have the help they looked for, for they had seen, ere the battle was joined, those taken banners, and the others had mocked them & bade them come across to serve under such and such a banner. So it was not long ere a many of them fellarthinking: What do we to perish here, when at our backs are those so mighty castles & strengths of ours? Let us draw away little by little and get behind our walls, and there gather force again But soon they found that they would have no such leave to depart but as broken men flee, ing at all adventure, for their foemen had entered too far into them, and had cleft their array in many places. Hnd their banners were thrown down and their captains unheeded, & at last there was no face of them against the foe; nought but heaps of huddled men, who knew not where to turn or whom to smite at: and the overthrow might be

peace of Longshaw

They crave no greater, for at noon, tide there was no host left that at matins had been as great and goodly an host as ever was

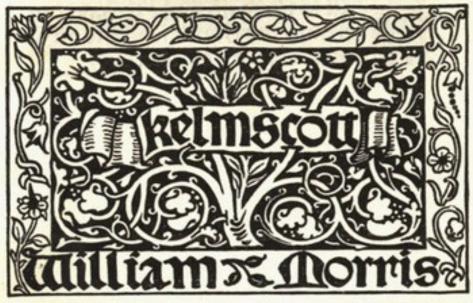
seen in those parts.

ND now was the purpose of the King and the Porte broken, and they must sit still and do nothing; nay, have got to be well content if the Small Crafts take not the occasion to rise against them. But to say sooth these knew their own opportunity and took it, as ye shall find hereafter.

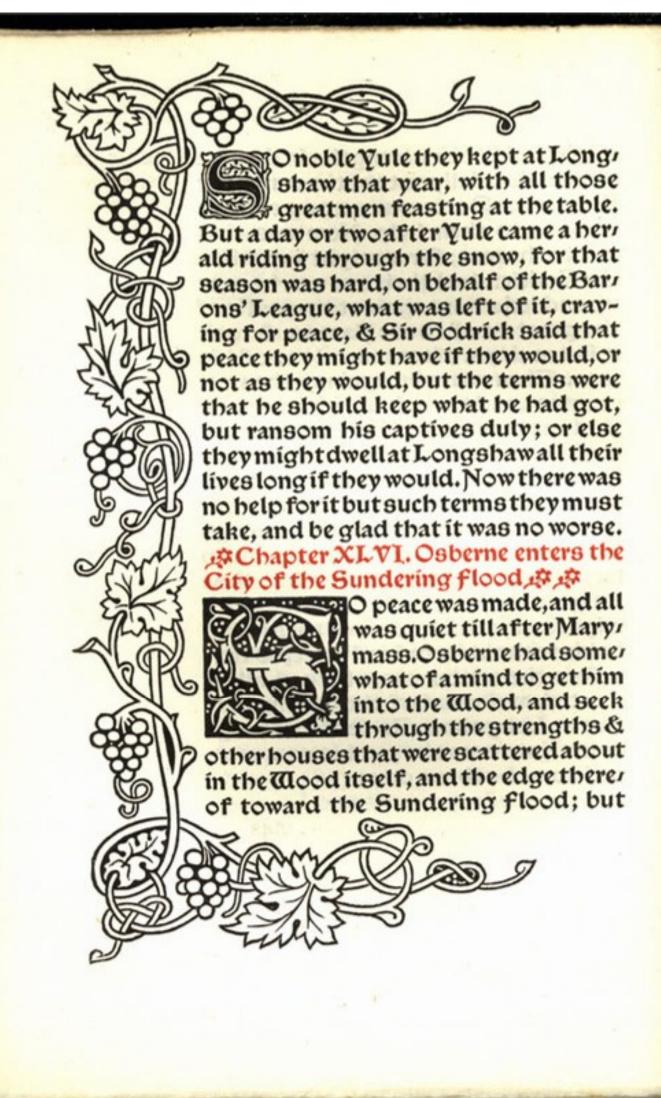
on the first of May, and ere a balf month was fully worn the Barons' Leaguesentaherald to Longshaw praying for peace; but Sir Godrick straightway sent back answer that he would grant the Barons peace when theyhaddeliveredupalltheirstrengths into his hands, then and not before. Such answer the herald bore back. But their proudstomachs had not yet come downso far, & they but sent back their defiance renewed; for they thought that, though they were not strong enough tomeet Longshawin the field, yet they might hold their strengths in despite The sieging of it, and so dally out the time until the of the King & the Porte were strong enough to come to their help. Now was this put to the test; for straightway, when Sir Godrick had their answer, he rose up and led a host against the castle of the greatest of those Barons, & took it in ten days, after much loss of his men. Then went he against the next greatest, and took that with less pain. And meanwhile the Red Lad to the north, & another captain to the south, had the business of riding here and there and making nought of any gathering if they heard of the beginnings thereof. And this they did, with much labour and no little battle; but thoroughly they did it, so as Sir Godrick might carryon his sieges of the strong, holds without let or hindrance, so that before the winter came he had all he wanted, and most of the Barons captive at Longshaw. Hs to the strongholds, into some he put his own men, and some be threw down.

Barons' strongholds

Fore ends the story of the Sundering flood, the last romance written by William Morris It was overseen by May Morris, and printed at the Kelmscott Press, Apper Mall, Hammersmith. finished on the 15th day of November, 1897.



Sold by the Trustees of the late William Morris at the Kelmscott Press.



ings after Marymass

partly he was sick at heart of for ever fresh tidasking questions to which came evermore but one answer, and partly there was very much work come to his hand that he might scarce turn over to another, of visiting the captured strong, holds, and seeing to the meniatiarms therein and the captains, and suchlike matters; for now he was closer to the rede and mind of Sir Godrick than any other.

O, as aforesaid, the time wore till Marymass was over, & then came fresh tidings, to wit, that the men of the Small Crafts & the lesser commons were risen against the Porte & the King, and had gotten to them the North Gate of the City, & were holding it against their foemen, together with that quarter of the City which lay round about it. The news hereof was sure, for it was brought to Longshaw one night by three of the weavers who had ridden on the spur to tell it to Sir Godrick, and these three men he knew well, & that they were trusty. Now so it was both that it had been not easy at

The Red Ladgoes to the City of the flood any time that war should find Longshaw not duly prepared, and also that
at this time there was no tidings which
Sir Godrick looked for more than
this. Speedy therefore was his rede.
for he gave into Osberne's hand fifteen
hundreds of his best men, & bade him
ride to the City & the North Gate and
see what the fields without the City
looked like, and the very next morning
the Red Ladandhis rode out of Long,
shaw, having with them two of the said
weaver, carles, but the third abode with
Sir Godrick.

way, leaders & knew all the passages and roads so inly, and so diligent was the Red Lad himself and his men so good and trusty, that by the second day about sunset he was but five miles from the North Gate, & he and his covered by some scattering woodland that lay thereabout.

a half score of spies to get them to the City and see what was toward, & come back, they that were not

slain, and tell him thereof. Straight- heasks way they went, and had such hap that rede of his all they came back unscathed, and this captains was their story: That the men of the Small Crafts were not by seeming hard pressed, for still their banners hung out from the North Gate and the wall and towers thereabout; but that both within the City had been bitter battle against them all day long, and also an host of men of their foes had come out from the East Gate, & were now lying round the North Gate in no very good order, because they looked for no peril save from them within the North Gate, and deemed that as for them they had enough on their hands to keep them within their walls, & least of all things did they look for any on fall from with, out.

BEREON the Red Lad called to him his captains and host-leaders & asked them of rede, and to be short therewith. Some said one thing, some another, as to send back news hereof to Sir Godrick, or to array them in the best wise to fall on these

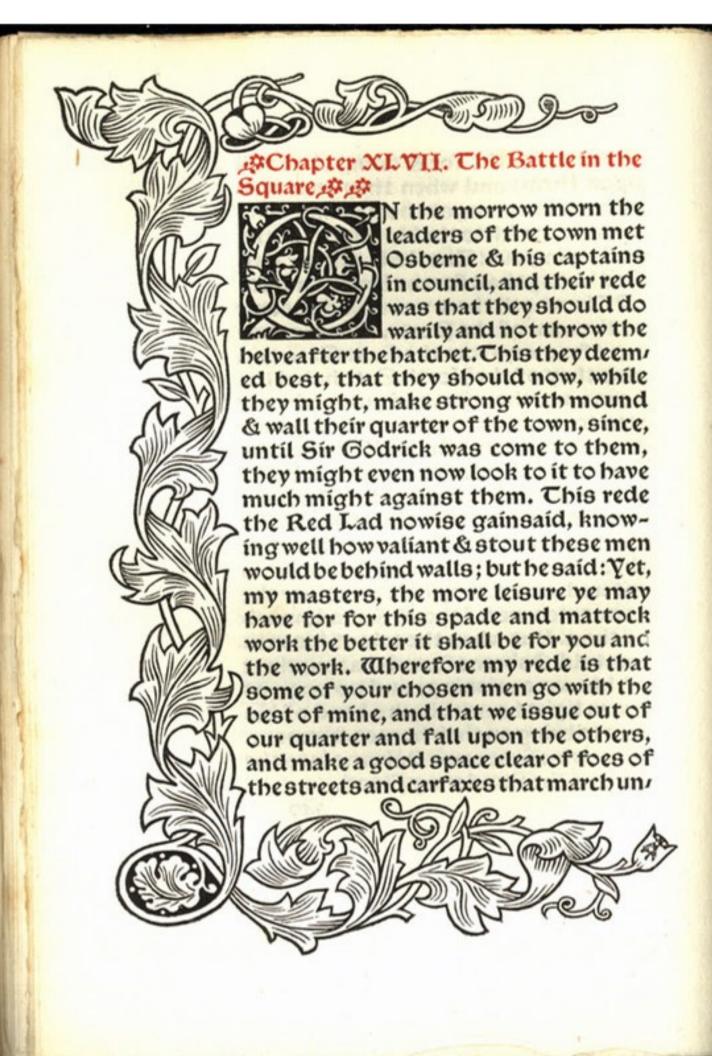
They set upon the East Gate by night

menon the morrow; nay, some were for hanging about till they should have news of Sir Godrick.

WAT when they were done, spake the Red Lad: Sirs, many of these things are good to be done, and some not; for sure am I that we be not sent hither to do nothing. But now if ye will, hearken my rede: it is now well, nigh dark, and in two hours or somewhat more it will be pit/mirk, and these men outside the walls will be going to their rest with no watch and ward set outward toward the upland. Wherefore I say, let us leave our horses here & do off so much of our armour as we may go afoot lightly; for if we win we shall soon get other horses & gear, and if we lose we shall need them not. But meseemeth if we do deftly & swiftly, all these men we shall have at our will.

do; so there was no more said, but they fell to arraying their men on foot, and in an hour they were on the way; and going wisely and with little noise, in two hours thence they

were amidst the foe & doing their will The gate upon them; and when they were well is taken entered in amongst them & had slain many, they fell to the blowing of horns and crying out: The Red Lad the Red Lad Longshaw for the Small Crafts Then both there was no aid to come to the men of the Porte, whereas they were far away from the East Gate, and also they of the North Gate heard the borns and the cries, and guessed what was toward; so they issued out with torches and cressets, and fell upon the foe crying their cries, and so it befell that none of that host of the Dorte es, caped save they who might make the night their cloak. Then was the gate thrown open, and the Red Lad and his entered, and ye may think whether the townsmen were joyous & made much of them. But when the tale of his men was told, Osberne found that but three of his were missing; and so soon as it was light he sent back a band of his men to bring on their horses & armour. Thuswise first came Osberne into the City of the Sundering flood.



to your quarter, which for sooth shall They draw serve you as an outwork to your castle until Sir Godrick comes with a great host & fills up all that and more. And, sooth to say, now at once is the best time to do this, while the foe is all astonied at what befell last night.

up their folk in the square

hAT seemed good to one and all; so when they had eaten and were duly arrayed they issued forth in, to the streets, & atfirst indeed wended those that were truly of their quarter, only on the day before they deemed them not big enough to hold all that; but now it was their mind to bring it within their defences. So the Red Lad & his rode on warily, taking heed that they should not be cut off by any at their backs. So at last they came unto agreat carfax with a wide square round about it. There they drew up their folk in a long line with a wide face to the foe, well furnished of bows and other shot, weapons; for the townsmen werearch, ers exceeding good.

They scatter the archers of the Porte here was nought in the square or on the carfax at first but themselves; but after a little there entered by the east way and the west a rout of archers, and fell to shooting at Osberne's, and they back again. The archers of the Porte did not dare to show much face to the Red Lad, but were gathered together in plumps at each incoming into the square. Said the Red Lad to himself: Let us make an end of this folly @ And he bade his men leave shooting, and then gave the word, and they rode at the carles right and left with spear & sword. Straight, way the archers ran all they might, yet not so fast but that the Red Lad and his captains got amidst them ere they could take to the narrow byways, so that a many were slain. And this was a matter of but ten minutes. But when the horsemen had been along with the bowmen a little while, they heard great borns blowing from the south, &there, with great noise of horse, & presently a great rout of meniatiarms in the best of armour began to come in by the

southernroad, and the Red Lad's men The King's were all agog to fall on them straight- men hinder way, but he made them for bear till they one another had filled the square overfull. They were not long about it, but meanwhile the townsmen shot all they might; & so nigh they were that, despite their armour, not a few fell, both of men and horses; yet did they fall not on till the square was full of them, so that it look, ed far bigger than might have been deemed. Then they thrust on, but so close that they might scarce handle their arms, and the Red Lad and his cried their cry, The Red Lad for Longshawl & rushed forward, smiting and thrusting, till the front of the foemen began to try to turn about if they might: but scarce they could, though if they might not flee they might not fall. And they behind strove to get forward to smite, for they said they were many more than the others; but they could get but little done, for their forward men who had been overthrown were hindering them. Now also the carlearchers of the town laid aside their 353

aa

The man in a yellow coat bows and entered among them with short swords and axes, and hewed and slew and took none to mercy, and it seemed hard to know how that would end, save by all those mentat arms falls

ing in the place.

was more thrust forward than any other, and somewhat of a space he had cleared before him, and his yellow hair came down from under his basnet, and his long red surcoat streamed all rent and tattered in the wind, and Board/cleaver was bare and bloody in his fist, & his face was stern but not exceeding fierce; for he would the slaughter of the day were over. Now he hove up Board/cleaver, and before him was a tall man in gilded armour & a gay yellow surcoat of silk, and his armour was little rent and his sword unscathed in his hand; a stark man he was of aspect, but terror was come into his soul because of the slaughter and the press and that there was no escape therefrom. So when he saw Boardcleaverarising he cried out: O Red Lad,

Red Lad, O thou seeker, let me live, De cries to that I may tell thee what thou wouldst speak with give many lives to know | Then Os- the Red Lad berne restrained Board/cleaver and let him fall to his wrist, and stretched out his hand to the gilded man. But even therewith his hand was thrust aside. for manyaman there was mad & drunk with the slaying: &ashort, dark, long, armed man of the weavers' craft, armed with nought else save a heavy sword cutting on the inner edge, drew him on to the gilded man's horse, & brought his short sword back/handed across his face and neck, and fell with him as be fell, and mangled him that he was more than dead, and then got up again amidst the horses & fell to work again. Then Osberne, when he saw the tale was done, groaned aloud; but none heeded him, for it was to them but as a cry of the wounded. Then he uphove Boardcleaveragain and cried out shrilly: The Red Lad, the Red Lad for Longshaw

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now they of the foemen began to cease

& the Crafts On, on at them 1 & And that all heard, both his and theirs. And comes

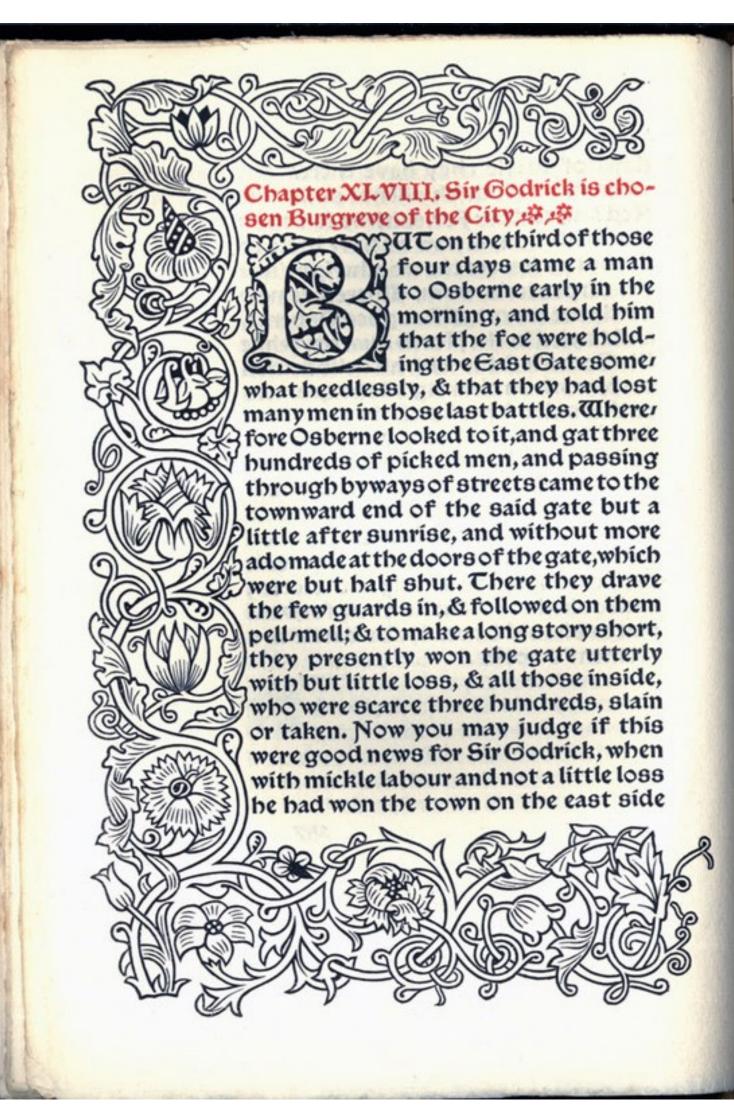
Sir Godrick pressing forward, & many fled without a stroke stricken, till there was somewhat more room for the rest to flee, but little leave, for even so was more room for the pursuers, and soon was the square clear of all but dead & sore burt; and the chase endured all up and along the carfax, and mad/fierceit was, and that mostly at the hands of the townsmen, who deemed that they had much to pay back to the men of the King and the Porte.

om after this Osberne and his drewnot back from the carfax, but by the rede of him the townsmen made trenches & walls to strengthen them right up to the said carfax. And for three days the King's men durst not fall upon them there, save that they tried a little arrow/shot from afar, but

did not much hurt thereby.

Tthe next day thereafter comes Sir Godrick with his host to the help of the townsmen, and rides into the North Gate amidst the joy of all men. And the next day they push on to their outworks & fall on. Three

days of battle they have thereafter, he clears wherein Sir Godrick will not suffer the the east Red Ladto deal: for, saith he, it is thou side that hath won, & now we have little to do, but as it were the woodwright's & the carpenter's work. Wherefore now I bid thee torest & Laughed Osberne, and tarried in the North quarter, while Sir Godrick & his with all deliberation set to work on clearing all the quarters onthat side of the river; & they were four days about the business, albeit the men of the Porte & the Kingwere scarce so stubborn & enduring as they had look, ed to find them. But Osberne did all hemight to keep good order and good heart amongst his men, & they made their strongholds strong to the letter, and looked to it that all their forward places should be ready for battle at a moment's notice.



of the Sundering flood.

The west side of the flood

BUT now, when they had won so much, they had yet to carry the war into the west side of the flood, where was forsooth the chief strength of the King and the Porte. for there was the King's palace & the great guildhall, both whereof were build, ings defensible, & moreover they had full command of all the haven and the ships therein, for they had all the quays and landing places and warehouses: so that both the sea and the river was under their wielding. Two bridges, made of great barges linked together, cross, ed the flood, one near to the haven, the other a good way higher up; nor had the King and his thought it good to break either of them down. Both had fair and great castles to guard themat either side.

Council of the Lesser Crafts had met in divers motes with Osberne & other captains of the Longs shaw host, it yet seemed a great matter that they had to deal with; and that

The King's men turned reivers

if they had won many victories, they had yet to win the great one. And all men saw what would have befallen if the Barons' League had not been so utterly broken up the year before. But now the greatest gain which Sir Godrick & the Lesser Crafts had was, that they by no means lacked men, & those of the best; & though they were shut out from chaffer with the merchants of the City, yet whereas the whole country/side was open to them because of the riders of Longshaw, they were not like to fall short of victuals. Though true it is that the King's men setswift keels on the Sundering flood stuffed of meniatiarms, and these would land on the eastern bank so far as a twenty or thirty miles up, and plunder & ravage the country folk, or whiles would come upon trains of victuals and suchlike wending towards the eastern city; and manyfierce deeds they did, which made them no better beloved, so that men got to saying that the King's men were but little better than the very Skinners themselves. Moreover, it is not to be 360

said but that often these reivers and Skirmishlifters were met by the riders of Long, ing between shaw or the weaponed men of the countryiside, & put to the worse by them, and such as were taken at these times had nought for it save the noose on the tree.

hosts

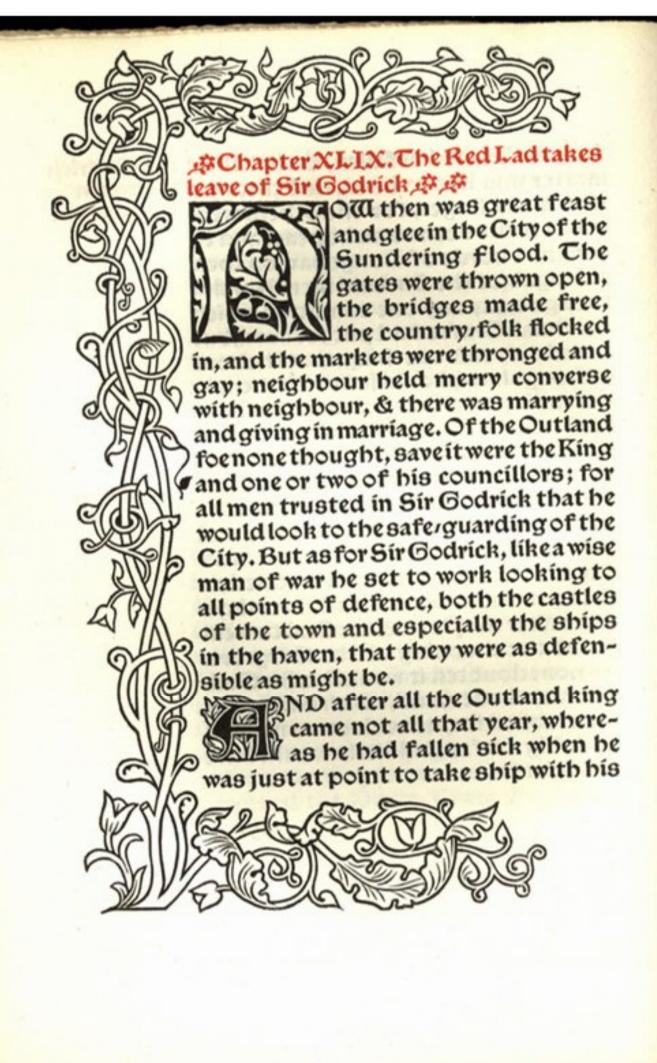
has then these two hosts looked across the Sundering flood on each other; and surely, unless the Craftsmen had been valiant and stubborn beyond most, they had lost heart, whereas war was not their mystery. Skirmishes there were a many. Whiles Sir Godrick would gather such boats and barges as they had, & thrust over into the haven, and lay hold of some goodshipandstrivetohaveheroverto their side. Whiles they might do nought therein, and whiles they prevailed; but even then the King's men contrived to set fire aboard the craft and spoil their play. Again, from time to time the King's men would set certain ships & barges across the flood, & strive to land and skirmish on the east side. But herein they but seldom gained aught, but they

H herald from the King and the Porte in turn would have their ships burned and their men slain or taken. Thus then it went on, and now one now the other came to their above; but neither might make an end of it.

ber was well worn, the King's folk came to the midmost of the upper bridge with a white shield aloft and a herald, & craved safe conduct for three of theirs, an old knight towit, and two aldermen of the Porte; this was granted, and they came all to the North Gate, and the council cham, berofthe Lesser Crafts therein. There they set forth their errand, which was in short that they would have peace if it might be had on such terms as were better than war and destruction. The men of the Small Crafts took their er, randwell, & asked them how long they might tarry, so that they might bear back conditions of peace. The messengers said that they were not looked for back that day, and the others said that by the next day at noon they would be all ready to send three of theirs

back across the water with the terms The terms of peace. Then were the messengers of peace handed over to the guest/masters and made much of, and the masters of the Crafts fell to close council with Sir Godrick & his captains. Now whatever other terms they bade need not be told, but the heart of the matter was this: first, that so many of the masters of the Small Crafts should sit on the Great Council of the City, and that enough tomake them of due weight in the Council. This they doubted not to gain since the war had gone with them. But the other was a harder matter, to wit, that a Burgreve should be appoint, edtogovern the City, & that he should be of might to hold a good guard, and eke it at his will & the will of the Great Council; the said Burgreve to be chos, en by all the Guilds of Craft, voting one with another, and not by the Great Council; which, as things went, would give the naming of him into the hands of the Lesser Crafts, who were more than the great ones, though far less rich and mighty. This indeed seemed

The King from oversea like to be hard to swallow, whereas it was much like putting the King out of his place. Yet some said that belike by thistime the Portewas grown mightier than the King, and if they would have it so, then would be have to give way. herein they were doubtless right; but another thing had happened of which they knew nought, which was driving the King and Porte both toward peace, to wit, that a king from over/sea had sent heralds defying the King, & that his host was to be looked for in no long while, and the King and the Porte well knew that they might make no head ar gainst him, so divided as they of the City then were. Wherefore when on the next day the three King's men bore back the terms of peace, they tarried but a little while, and came back in two hours with safe conduct for as many as Sir Godrick and the Small Crafts would send. Whereon Sir Godrick and twoof the Crafts were chosen, and went back across the water straightway, & without any tarrying fell to council with the King and the Porte. There they soon found what had befallen, & that their Sir Godrick matter was like to be carried through is chosen with a wet finger, for the others were Burgreve in hot haste both to make peace and to get the swords of Longshaw on their sideagainst the Outland men. Nordid they gainsay any one condition which the Small Crafts had put forward, but added only this one thing, that the host of Longshawshould join with them in defending the City against the Outlandmen. Bereto Sir Godrick accorded well, for he had no mind that all his bat, tle for the Small Crafts should have been of no avail, as it would be if Outlanders were to conquer the City and play the tyrant there. The very next day then was peace signed & sealed on the terms above/said. And three days thereafter the Porte & the Crafts went about the choosing of the Burgreve. Hs none doubted it would be, Sir God, rick was chosen, and, which had scarce been looked for, none else was named; both big crafts and little would have none but be.



host; so that all was put off till the Allmen are next spring, and there was time and to content

spare for Sir Godrick to do all he would in strengthening the defences of the City.Butnonethemoreforthatwashe sluggish, but did so much that he made the City of the Sundering flood exceeding strong, so that it might scarce be stronger: and all things flourished there; old foes became new friends, & all men were well content, save it were the King and his faitours, who rued it now that they had sold themselves so

cheap.

MIDST all this, Osberne was somewhat more at Longshaw & the borders of the Wood Masterless than in the City. Of numberless folk did heask his old questions, & gat ever the same answer, that they knew nought of it; & indeed now it was less and less like that they should know aught as time wore. So that at last he began to get ungleefulat whiles & few, spoken with men. Came the spring, & therewith the mighty Outland conqueror; but the shortest tale to tell of 367

needs no King

The City him is, that there he conquered nothing, but was held aloof at all points, save here and there he was suffered to break through to his great scathe. But his host was so big, that he hung about till the autumn. He gat but one gain, such as it was, that ere he brake up his host the King of the City fled to him & became his friend. And they two took rede together as to what they should do the next year to fall upon the land which was his, as he said.

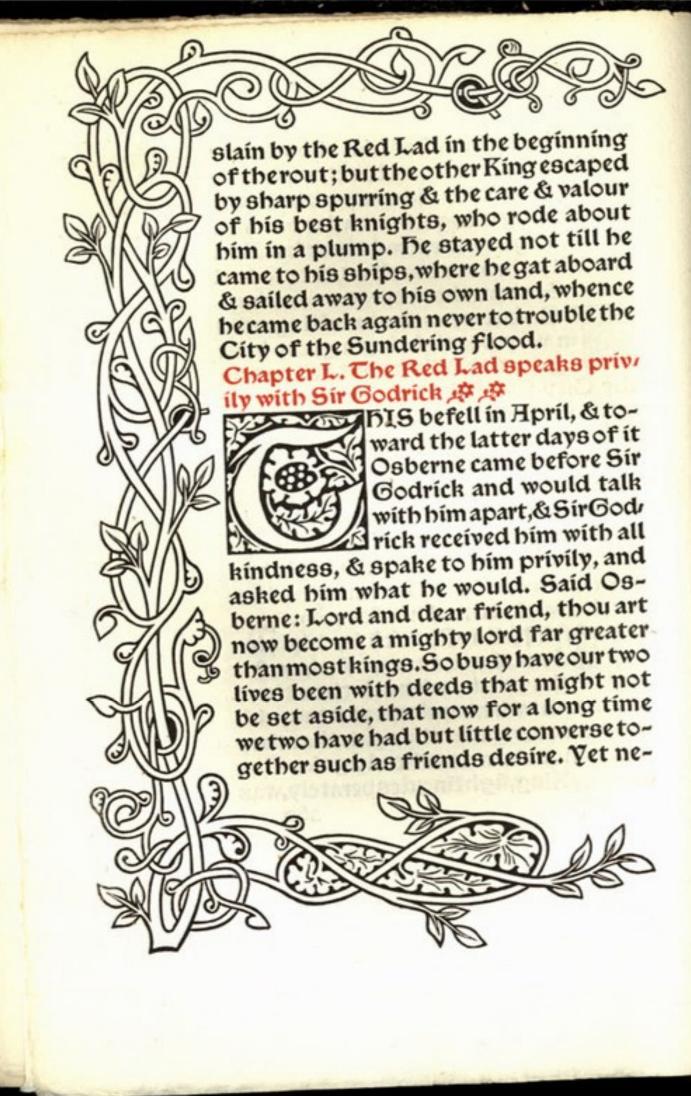
EHNTIME, his back being turned upon his once subjects, many men began to think that belike they might do without him once and for all, when they cast up the use he had been to them in times past. And this imagination grew, until at last a great Mote was called, and thereit was put forward, that since the City had a Porte and a great Council, and a Burgreve under these, the office of King was little needed there. So first with one accord they escheated their runaway, who they well knew would henceforth be their foe, and gave out that all they who had held of him should now The two hold of the Porte; and next, with little Kings do gainsaying, they did away with the of, battle fice of King altogether, and most men felt the lighter hearted therefor. And the City throve as well as ever it had

the City throve as well as ever it had done. So wore that year to an ending.

in very sooth bring a great host against that folk; but fell not on the City itself, but gat a land some twenty miles to the south least thereof; and this they did easily, because Sir Godrick, with the rede of the Great Council, let them do so much, whereas he deemed it were well if he might be done with them once and for all. So he gat the very pick of his folk together, of whom was the Red Ladin high place, much dreaded of all his foemen.

dom chose time and place for the battle, whereas the others must fight when and where he would. Such an overthrow they gat, that they might not draw to a head again. The oldCityKing,fighting desperately,was

bb 369



vertheless through it all I have felt thy Sir Godrick loveuntome, as mine unto thee, where asks what fore this word that I must sayirks me he will do sorely, to wit, that now at last we must presently part.

HID Sir Godrick: If I am become a mighty ruler, thou hast become a warrior so mighty that I well think the world holds none other such; and true it is that I love thee no worse for all the hard and troublous days. And hard & troublous have they been forsooth; so that oft have I bethought me of that old man the king of the kine, & his welcome and his bid, ding, in the wide green valley by the river whereby we passed when we were wending to Longshaw that first time, though well I wot that earth has no such refuge forme. I say thou art great, and I love thee; wherefore thou hast a right to make thy choice, and least of all would I balk thee in thy desire. Belike we may meet again. Now wilt thou tell me what thou wilt do? Said Osberne: With a good will. for this is true, lord, that having been now five bb2 371

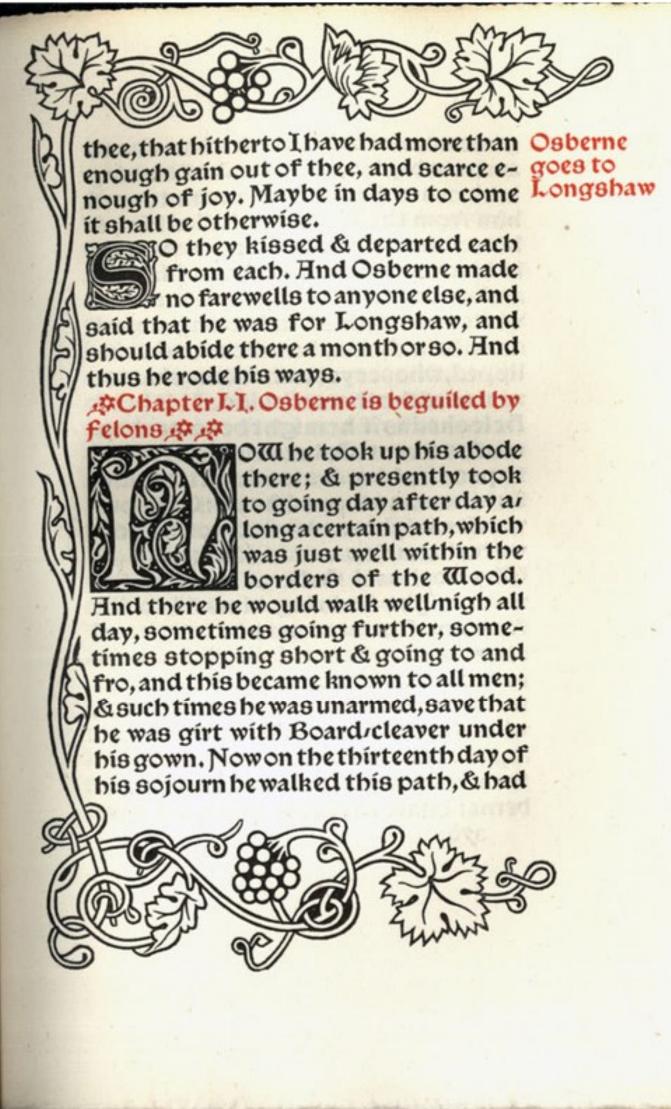
to the Dale

years amongst all sorts of folk, and will go back some of them being such as might tell me some tidings of what I seek, I have had no tidings, and now needs must I say that lost is lost. But first, before I give all up, I will go to Longshaw and abide there, and hang about the Wood foramonth, to give me one last chance; and then if nought befall, I shall ride straight to my folk in the Dale beside the Sundering flood, and there shall I live and die in such content as I may. And I do thee to wit, my friend, that the picture of the grey bents and the long houses, and the sheep and beasts going to and fro, and the few folk of the stead, and the hall within with its shining black timbers, all this comes before me and softens my heart. for hast thou not noted how bitter & surly I have grown in these latter days? I have seen thee sad, said Sir Godrick. Nay, said Osberne, it is worse than that; but let it be. Well, now I shall tell thee another thing that hath got hold of me, and thou wilt think it wild folly belike. But this it is: When I am in my own Dale again, then the first morning Belike a when I arise I shall hie me straight to miracle that old trysting/place, & look across shall betide the Sundering flood; and then it may be that a miracle of God shall betide. and that I shall see my maiden there in her old place, and then shall we be no moreutterly disunited, as though each for each we were neither of us in the world.

HID Sir Godrick: This is a hope of no great things, nor is it like to come about. Were it well for this to leave thy fellows & thy friends and all the fame of thine that shall be? @ Osberne laughed. Hh yes, he said, some deal I know it now, that fame; when we draw together before the foemen, &our men cry out, The Red Lad! the Red Lad in no faltering voice, and even therewith the foeman's ranks quaver, as the trees of the wood when the wind comes up from the ground amongst them; and then I ride forward with Boardicleaver in my fist, and the arrows fly away about me for fear, and the array opens before me, & we plunge

bids bim beware

Sir Godrick in and find nought there, and the rout goes down the green meadows. Yea, so it is, and many deem it fair. But then comes the quiet of the night, and my comrades are as though they were dead, and my praisers are voiceless, and I am alone; and then meseems it is I that have been overthrown & thwarted, and not thine enemies and mine, my friend. Nay, let me go back to my folk and the land that I know, and that endures before me when others have faded out: there will I abide whatso may come to me. Then he said: Moreover there is this last month at Longshaw; who knows what may there betide? I shall keep my eyes and ears open I promise thee Hhl said Sir Godrick, but beware, Red Lad, beware! thou knowest how much hatred thou hast drawn up on thee for thy dealings with the rascaile of the Mood. Be sure that traps will be laid for thee, and look to it that thou walk not into one! And now I will say to thee farewell! It may be many a long day ere I see thy face again; and yet methinks I shall. And now I tell



Mood

he meets a gone somewhat further than usual, man in the andwas beginning to think of turning back, when there came a man toward him from the Mood and hailed him, & he took his greeting. The man was clad in black, and had a buckler at his back and sword and dagger by his side, a white sallet on his head: a long mosed, dark/haired man, beardless and thinlipped, whose eyes came somewhat too near to each other each side of his head. helookedasif hemight besomechapi man's servant. Osberne looked for him to pass by him, & stood a little aside; but the man stopped & said: O famous warrior, might a carle of no worth speak with thee a few words this noon? Thy not? said Osberne smiling, for never might he bring himself to the fashion of great men to be rough and short with common folk & Said the newcomer: Thouart far from the host torday, and hast no angry look on thee, wherefore I shall risk thy wrath by say, ing that thou lookest somewhat less than gleeful, great warrior, & Said Osberne: I have a trouble on me, & I have

been forced to let many men know there, The carle of Wallt thou tell me thereof? said questions the newcomer; maybe I shall be the him last to whom thou shalt tell it @ Osbernelooked on him a while doubtfully and anxiously; at last he said: This it is. five years ago a maiden was stolen from me, and I have sought her since in many places, & have heard no word concerning her of any avail Said the carle: Dost thou remember the battle in the square & the carfax of the great City, and how there was a man before thy mighty hand who cried out to spare his life, for that he could tell thee of the said maiden? & thereon thou wert about to give him peace, but ere thou couldst take him to thy mercy he was slain by one of the carlesweavers? Yea, said Osberne, I remember it Now, said the carle, I shall make no mystery of it, but shall tell thee at once that that same man was the brother of the master whom now I serve. And I bave an errand from him unto thee and he saith that what his brother knew, he knows, and somewhat more; & thy

De will sell him the tale maiden is yet alive, and that he can tell thee how to find her surely if thou wilt. Andheisnot far hence Osberne look ed somewhat wildly, and he caught the carle by the hand and cried out: Good fellow, bring me to him at once and I will well reward thee PNay, said the carle, but there comes something before that; my master is a chapman, and liveth by selling, not by giving; and he will take of thee two hundred nobles before thou hast his tale. Thou and I may call that weregild for the slaying of his brother Pea, said Osberne, but I carry not two hundred nobles in my pouch Mellthen, said the carle, I will be here to morrow or the day after, if thou wilt O nay, nay, said Osberne, but abide thou here, and I will go up to the castle and fetch the gold & So be it, said the carle; & he sat him down by the way side, & pulled out victuals & wine from his scrip & fell to dining. AUT Osberne put forth all his

swiftness of foot, & was speed, ily in his lodging, and came to

his treasury and took forth the gold 378

and set it in a bag, and hastened back The carle again, and found the carle where he had leads him lefthim & Thouartswift/footindeed, through the said the carle, but belike thou shalt not often again run so fast as thou hast e'en now. But thou art breathed; wilt thou not sit down a while till thou come round? No, said Osberne shortly, I will on at once @ Well then, said the carle with a grin, suffer me to carry thy bag Takeit, said Osberne, & reached it out to him @ The carle handled the bag&said: Dlumpare then obles, lord, if there be but two hundred herein, There is more in it, said Osberne, for there is the gift for thee. But lead thou on straightway @ So the carle led on, & they went by divers woodland paths for some two hours, & then they heard the sound of a little water falling. Quoth the carle: It is down in this ghyll that my master promised to abide me And therewith he began to go down the side of a ghyll well bushed and treed, & somewhat steep, and Osberne followed him. When they got to the bottom there was a fair space of flat greensward

Osberne is underneath a little force of the water; wounded but no man awaited them.

SERE is thy master, good, fellow? said Och ter, good will scarce be far, said the carle; I will call him #Hnd therewith he set two fingers to his mouth & whistled shrilly. Now Osberne was all beswinked with his run to and fro the castle & his two hours' walk thereafter, and he was sore athirst, so he went down on his knees to drink of theclear little pool beneath the force. Hndnow, what with the failing day and the tall trees well nigh meeting overhead, it was dusk in the ghyll; and moreover as Osberne drank, and he was in no hurry about it, with his face to the force and his back to the length of the ghyll, the tinkling & splashing of the force deaf, ened his ears to any sound but a some what big one. So he drank & thought no evil; but of a sudden he felt a sharp pain in his left side, and ere he could say that he knew he had been smitten, another and another, & he rolled over on to the greensward and lay still, and

there stood above him three men, the They flee carlemessenger to wit and another of before a like sort, & a third clad in white arm- newcomer our. The end of the Red Lad! quoth the messenger @ Nay, said the other carle, draw thy sword and smite the bead from him, lord; make sure of him. The knight half drew his sword from the scabbard; but then stayed his hand and said in a quavering voice: Nay, nay let us begone Dost thounot see? There is one sitting by him ! DIt is a bush in the dusk, said the other; give me thy sword But the knight for all answer ran swiftly down the ghyll, & they two that were left shrank and trembled, for there verily sat one by the wounded man in a scarlet kirtle, as they deemed, &a bright steel basnet. Sotherran also after their master, and all three fell to climbing the side of the abyll.

Soul about a mile thence was a certain hermitage in a clearing of the Mood, & when the night was growing dark the door was smitten on, and when the hermit opened,

and the bermit

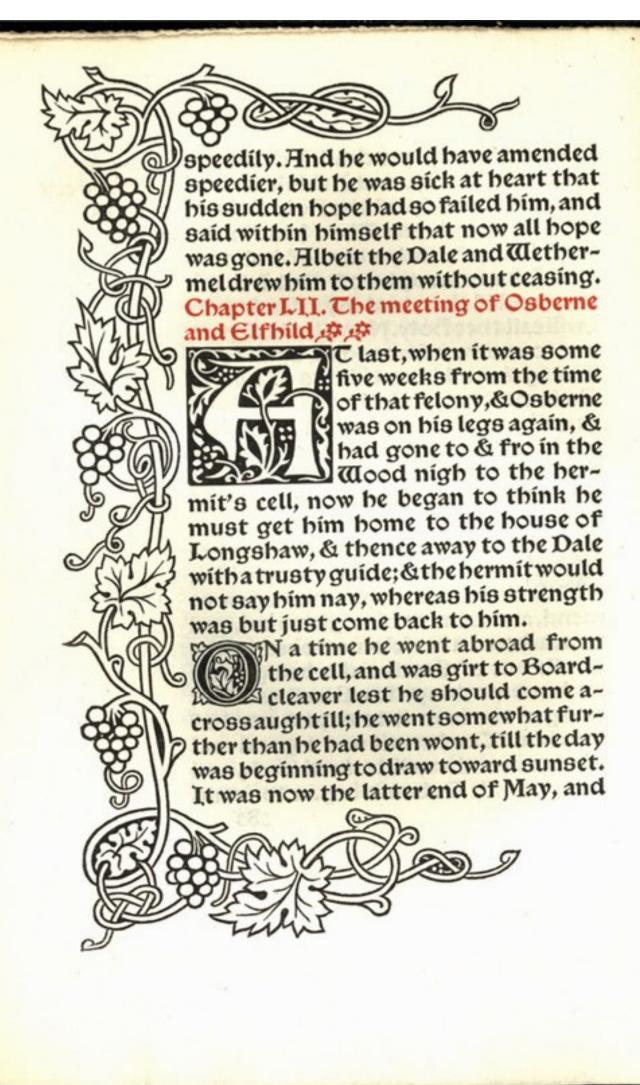
Steelhead there was before him a tall nobleslooking man in scarlet kirtle & bright steel basnet, bearing in his arms another man dead or grievously hurt. And the tall man said: Canst thou leechdom? Yea, said the hermit, therein have I been well learned @ See here then, here is a man grievously hurt, but he is not dead. Now I have done all I might for him, for by my craft I have staunched his blood; but I wot that he needeth long leechdom to be made whole. Now I may not come under thy roof, so take him of me, and lay him on thy bed and look to him, & do thy best; for if thou heal him thou shalt thrive, and if thou heal him not thou shalt dwindle fair sir, said the hermit, I need neither promise northreat, for God's love & Allhallows' I will heal him if it may be.

o he took Osberne from Steelbig man got him on to the bed & did off his raiment. Then he search, ed his grievous hurts according to leechcraft, and presently looked up from the wounded man & said: Since

this man is not yet dead, I deem not Osberne his hurts deadly, and I think to heal lies between him with the help of the holy Saints. Said Steelhead: Thou hast in thy death mouth, my friend, a deal of holiness that I know nought of. But I thank thee, and if thou heal my friend verily Iwill call thee holy. Now shall I depart, but to morrow forenoon I shall come bere again and learn tidings of him Go in peace, and God and Allhallows keep thee, said the hermit @ Well, well, said Steelhead, we will not contend about it, but I look to it to keep myself. #Hnd therewith he strode off into the night.

BERE then lay Osberne between life & death a long while; but after a time he began to mend, and came to his right mind, and remembered the felonistrokes in the ghyll: but of Steelhead's being there he knew nothing, for Steelhead had charged the hermit to say no word of it to him. The hermit was a good and kind man and a well-learned leech, and after a while Osberne began to mend

life and



the leaves & boughs were at their fair- The Red est: thesky was bright and blue, & the Lad meets a birds were singing in heavenly choir, carline & hescarce thought it good to go back speedily to the dark cell. So he went on a little further and a little further, till he was ware in the glade before him of one whom, as she drewnigher to him, he saw to be a seemly dame as for her years, straight and tall; neither was she clad in rags, but in a comely black gown and white coif. Nevertheless, as 'tis said, Once bit, twice shy, soit was with him, & he was for giving her the gorby. But she would not have it so, & she greeted him & said: hail to thee, noble; whence artthoulast? Bhervoice was clear and good, and now as he looked in her face he deemed he saw no evil in it, but good, will rather. But he said: hail to thee, dame: I am last from a sick bed, where quile and felony had laid me # Well, said she, but there is something else than guile and felony in the world, is therenot? [Iknownot, saidheshort, ly I have seen something else, if only once, she said. I have seen truth and

CC

She bids him to her dwelling good/faith and constancy & hope with/ outreward; and five years have worn no whit of that away @ hah, said he; was it a man, a warrior? Meseems I know one such, were it not for the hope Nay, said she, it is a woman @ Hnd what like is she to look on? said he. She answered: If thou wilt come withme, she is no great way hence abid, ingmy home coming & Said Osberne: But what or who is it she is true to? or for whom doth she long, hoping againsthope? Isit father, brother, son, sister, or what? Said the carline: It is her troth/plight man; and verily I, as well as she, deem that he is worthy of it: or was when last she saw him.

Good dame, if this be so, what profit were it to me to see her? I am not her troth/plight man, and if it be as thou sayest, I shall be unto her as one of the trees of the wood. There will be this profit, said the carline, that thou wilt set eyes on one of the fairest creatures that God ever made. Small profit therein, said Osberne, laughing

again, if I set eyes on her beauty & am Osberne ensnared thereby; then maybe shall be fears beanother tale for this woodland. for be, guilement like thou deemest me old, but I am a young man, only I am baggard with the battle between life and death as I lay wounded yonder @ Therewith he pulled aback his bood, and the carline came close up to him and looked him hard in the face, but said nothing. Then he said: Dame, to be short with thee. I have walked into the traponce, and will not again if I may help it. Now I know not what thou art; for all I know thou mayst be a bait of my foes, or even a sending from evil things. Nor hast thou yet said any word why specially I should come with thee.

The was still standing close to him, and now she laid her hand on his breast and said: This I say as a last word, and thou must take it how thou wilt. If thou dost not come with me now, thou shalt rue it only once, to wit, all thy life long.

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They go together

Elooked on her & knit his brows, and said at last: Well, it is little to throw away the end of my life, & there may be some tidings or tracks of tidings to be found. I will go with thee, dame. Only this time, he muttered, let there be no coming to life again. hou art wise, said the carline; let us lose no time So they setoff, & up and down by rough and smooth, till the wood was quite dark, & the stars were overhead when they came to a clearing, and sweet was the peace of the Maynight. Htlast they saw before them a glimmer of light, which as they wound about became presently a little window, yellow/litten, & castingits light upon a space of green, sward and a little tinkling brook. So came they to a little cot, seemly enough thatched with reed from the woodland meres. Osberne made up toward the door, but the carline put forth her hand &thrust him back, & said: Not yet; abidewherethouartaminute; & straight, way fell to going withershins round the house. This she did three times.

while Osberne gat his anlace bare in he sees a his hand.

maiden in the ball

T last the carline came to him, and spake softly to him in his ear: Hll is free now, dalesman, comethoul . And she took him by the hand and opened the door, and lo, a little hall like many another cot, but clean and sweet and comely. Now Osberne had pulled his hood about his face again, & looked round; for as often happens when one enters a chamber, the child of Hdam therein is the last thing one sees. Then he drew back a lite tle, & stood there trembling. for what was in the chamber besides the simple plenishing was a maiden who stood up to receive them; tall she was and slen, der, clad in a dark blue gown; her hair dark brown & plenteous, her eyes grey, her chin round and lovely, her cheeks a little hollow, & in the hollow of them en treaty&allenticement:shestoodlook, ing shyly at the newcomer, of whose face she might see but little. The carline seemed to note neither her nor Osberne, but cried out in a cheerful voice:

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Three wayfarers come to the cot Now child, if I be somewhat later than I was looked for, yet I have brought the gift of a guest, seest thou; a good knight who hath of late been brought to death's door by felon's deed, but is now grown whole and fight worthy again. So let us bestir us to get him meat and drink and all that he needeth.

Othey fell to, while Osberne stood where he had first come in; & he scarce knew where he was, but look ed down on the floor, as though the Sundering flood of the Dales rolled betwixt him & the maiden; for indeed when his eyes first fell upon her he knew that it was Elfhild. Now the two women had not been long at dighting the supperere there came arough knock on the door, and straightway the latch was lifted and in strode three meniati arms; two in jack and sallet with bucks lers and sword and dagger, the third a knight clad in white armour with a white surcoat. This stirred Osberne out of his dream, and he sat down on a stool nearer in than he had been. The Knight cried out: To dame, I see thou

Osberne

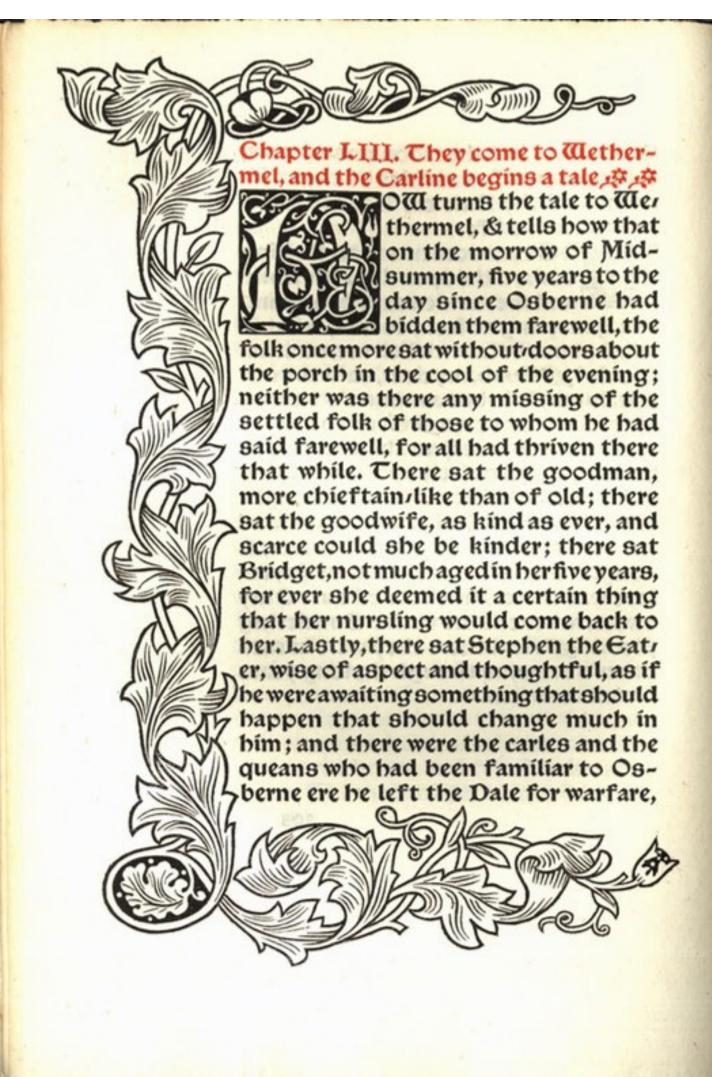
hast one guest, and now here be three They would more for thee; we have stabled our mishandle horses in thy shed already, so thou hast nought to do save getting us our supper: dispatch I bid thee. And now who is this tall carle sitting there?

SBERNEknew them at once as they came in, that they were the three felons who had smitten him in the ghyll. The answered nought, &kepthis hood abouth is face. @Roger. quoth the Knight, & thou, Simon, cannot ye get an answer from the lither loon? Roger lifted up his foot and kicked Osberne roughly, & Simon laid hold of his bood to pull it off him, but founditheld tight enough; & Osberne spake in a gruff and hollow voice: I am a living man; ye were best to let me be. @Then had there been battle at once, but even therewith comes in Elfhild bearing a pewter measure of wine and beakers withal, & the newcomers stood staring at her beauty, silent for a minute. Then the Knight did off his basnet and spake in a loose, licorous voice: The liquor we hoped for, but not the

Boardcleaver is bared cup/bearer; and so it is, that I would liefer have the cup bearer than the cup. fair maid, will not a kiss go before the pouring out? ornever shall I have heart to drink # And he rose up & went toward the maiden, who stood confused and trembling, & turned pale. But Osberne had risen also, & with a quick turn had thrust between the White Knight and Elfhild, & now stood with his back to her, facing the felons. What, curl cried the White Knight; shall we have thee out & flay thy back with our stirrup/leather? SaidOsberne, speaking slowly: That is the third question too much thou hastasked in these last few minutes.Lothoul Hndheshookhis bood from his face and had Board, cleaver bare in his hand straightway. Then those three set up a quavering cry of, The Red Lad the Red Lad & ran bundling out of the cot; but Board, cleaver was swifter than they. One of the servingmen lost his head just out, side the threshold; the Knight stumbled at the brook and fell, & neverrose again. The messenger strove hard for the thicket, but the moon was up now, The meet-& it was but a few strides of the swift ing of Osrunner of the Dale ere Boardicleaver had taken his life.

berne and his love

The two women stood looking toward the open door the while, and the maiden said faintly and in a quavering voice: Mother, what is it?what has befallen? Tell me, what am I to do? Tush, my dear, said the car, line, hush; it is but a minute's waiting after all these years @Even therewith camea firm footstep to the door, &Osberne stepped quietly over the threshold, bareheaded now, & went straight to Elfhild; and she looked on him, and the scared look went out of her face, & nought but the sweetness of joyful love was there. And he cried out: O my sweet, where is now the Sundering flood? # And there they were in each other's arms, as though the long years had never been.



with some few children amongst them Three who had not been there five years a- booded go. It was growing late now, and the twilight was creeping up under a cloud, less sky, when those folk saw newcom ers wending the lane betwixt the outbowers, and making straight for the house porch. They were but three, and as they drew nigh it could be seen that they were booded and cloaked despite the warm night; and one was tall and seemed a stalwarth man, and another was jimp & went daintily, as if it were a young woman, & the third, who for-

sooth had her face but little hidden, seemed a carline of some three/score

years and ten.

SONE of the folk stirred save Stephen the Eater, who rose up as if to welcome the guests; & the tall man spake in a strange high voice that seemed to come from the back of his head: May we three wayfarers be here to might? for we saw this stead from afar, and it seemed a plenteous house, & we deem it guest/kind. Quoth Stephen: H free & fair welcome

wayfarers

The guests are welcomed

toyou; yeshalleatofourdish, & drink of our cup, and lie as the best of us do. ho, ye folk! now were we best within doors; for our guests shall be both

weary and hungry belike.

o into the hall they wended, and the three were shown to a good place amidmost thereof, so that all might see them; and there they sat, the tall man innermost, nighest to the dais, the young woman by him, and the carline outermost. Then came in the meat, which was both plenteous and good, and when all were fulfilled the drink was brought in, and the tall man arose & called a health on Wethermel. & that it might thrive ever. But some men thought that, as he lifted his hand to put the cup to his lips, a gleam of something bright came from under his wayfarer's cloak. And Stephen the Eater called a health on the wayfarers; and then one drank to one thing, one to another, and men waxed merry & gleeful. But at last rose up Stephen the Eater and spake: Meat and drink and lodging is free without price to every 396

comer to Wethermel, and most oft, as The tall here it is, our good will goes with it; man speaks yet meseemeth that since these friends of ours come belike from the outlands & countries where is more tidings than mostly befalleth here, it might please them to make us their debtors by sayingus some lay, or tellingus some tale; for we be not bustled to drink the voir deercupnow, these nights of Midsum mer, when night & day hold each other's hands throughout all the twenty four hours.

henrose up the tall, high woiced man and said: It is my will that each one of we three should say something, be it longorsbort, tomake the folk of Methermel glad, for they have treated us wayfarers as though wewere lords & kings, and their words go to our hearts. Now I will that thou, mother, begin, and that I make an end of this saying.

DEN he sat down, & the carline said: I am all the more willing to this, as meseemeth I can tell you a tale such as ye have never heard The Car- the like of, & which will move every heart line's tale of you. And yet I must pray your pa-

tience, as belike it may be somewhat long for a tale of one night's hall glee; & on this night must the tale be begun

and ended. Bearken then!

man, yet no cripple, who dwelt in a stead beside a greatriver, which none might cross either by bridge or ford or ferry.

But she dwelt not alone, neither was the house her own; for with her abode a damsel young of years, who was the owner of the said house, but had no kindred, for father and mother and all else had passed away from her. Therefore it is like that the Carline came to dwell with her because she loved the Maiden, and would serve her & do good to her. Hnd no wonder was that, for not only was the Maiden now grown so beauteous that she was the pearl of all beauty, but also she was merry & kind, and loving as might be. So that none that saw her but must love her if they

had any good in them.

The Maiden is loved

om ye will ask, since so it was en is loved with her, was there no young man who was drawn into the netof her love. But I must tell you that the stead where these twain dwelt was lonely, & there was but little recourse of folk thither. Yet I say not but that there was more than one young man of the dwellers thereby who thought it betterthan good to come to the house and sit & talk with her, and would have kissed & caressed her had they durst; but they durst not, for not one of them touched her heart; and though she was kind & friendly with every one of them, there was nought in her words or her mien by which they might anywise deem that she would suffer the toys of love from them. Sooth to say, the Maiden had a love, a fair youth & a stalwarth, and a glorious man, and many were the words they had spoken together, but never had her hand touched his hand, nor his lips her lips; because betwixt these two was a river such as are few upon the earth, unbridged, unfordable,

Attimes she laments

unferryable. And few might think that it was anywise like to betide that ever their two bodies should touch each the other; but the Carline, who was somewhat wise in lore, had an inkling that, despite this terrible bedge of water, the

twain should one day meet.

the Maiden was patient, & abode the sundering with no ill cheer. But whiles her trouble was over/heavy for her, & she would wander forth into the wood or the field, and go weeping and lamenting there; or she would sit in the chamber with the Carline, & cry out aloud on her love to come to her, & on all things on the earth and in the heavens, yea, the Great God himself sitting amongst the Cherubim, to help her, that for once, if once only before she died, she might feel her love's arms about her and his face laid to hers.

R again, she would, as it were, tell stories of how it would betide that at last they should meet, both grown old, & kiss once, and so walk hand in hand into the Paradise

The Red Skinners in the Dale

of the Blessed, there to grow young again amidst the undying spring, in the land where weariness is come to nought; and there would she sit and weep, as if there were no ending to the wellof her tears. At such times was the Carline sore grieved for her, and would strive to comfort her by giving her some little inkling of the hope which she, the old woman, had conceived in her heart, that the meeting of those two should come about whiles they were yet young and lovely; more than that she might not tell the Maiden, lest the might should ebb from her. Thus wore the days between patience & despair, betwixt cheer and lamentation.

some eighteen summers, great matters befell that country/side; for on a day came the alien reivers, such as are called the Red Skinners, with intent to rob & carry off all that was not too hot or too heavy for them, and to lay waste & destroy all that they might not bear away. But the folk of the land met them valiantly, & their friends on dd

ride to the house

Three men the other side of the fierce river aforesaid helped them what they might with the shot/battle; & great and grim was the murder, &the stour of the hardest.

Out there were the Maiden and the Carline at their house, and nought easy was the rede for them. The Maiden bade flee to the next stead, which was some four miles thence, but the Carline bade abide. lest they be caught upon the way, which for sooth she deemed was most like to be tide if they left the house. & that rede they took at the last. So they sat expecting what should befall them.

OR a long while none of the aliens came anear them; but at last, when the battle was at its fiercest, rode up three men leading twounbacked horses, and they were of the mien and in the gear of the Red Skinners; and the Carline stood in the door to meet them, and she spake to them and said: What will ye, warriors? Why are ye not in the battle with your fellows? Said one: Because our errand is here and not there; neither are those

men our fellows. We be the servants They tell of that goodly merchant who guested their errand here a while ago, & would have bought the Maiden within there in all bonour. & ve rewarded his good will with scorn and mocks and japes and scurvy dealing; wherefore he hath set these reivers on your folk, & hath sent us along with them to look to you. And two fold is our errand, to bear away the Maiden without a price, and to slav thee. Dahl dost thou like it?

the Carline remembered the coming of the said merchant, & how he had cast his love on the Maiden unbonestly and lustfully, and would have lain by her against her will had it not been for the lore of the said Carline, who letted him of his evil will and sent him away shamed.

Tale now she muttered something under her breath, & look-ed on those men, & made signs with her fingers, and then spake aloud: Slay me speedily then, whiles ye are about it; for I take no great keep of life. @Themen handled their weapons, but dd2 403

The Carline casts a spell on them

nothing came of it, & they sat in their saddles staring on the Carline as if they were mazed. And even therewith ran the Maiden forth from the house, and cast her arms about the Carline, & cried out: Nay, nay! but ye shall not slay her! for as my mother hath she been, and none other have I had save her. But as for me, I will go with you without more words. But I pray you by your salvation to take this my mother with you, for I cannot do to be without her; and if I miss her, then shall I be of little use, miserable & forlorn, to that lord of yours that ye tell of so goodly.

braced her, & then turned to those men and laughed in their faces; & they seemed presently as if awaking out of slumber, & one said: Well, this may be; I see not why we should not slay thee there as well as here; & since the damsel would have it so, we will have thee along with us, & let the maiden settle it with our lord whether he will be wheedled by her or not. But come, to horse both of you! for time presses.

So the two women were setarhorser The Maiden back. & the men rode with a good pace bemoans out of the Dale toward the fells at the her back thereof; & if at any time the women thought of turning rein & riding off, they had but to look on the men. how they were horsed, for their waybeasts were mighty strong steeds of good race, but the women were set on every/day nags, such as be seen on any highway.

FTER a while they came on to the broken ground at the foot of the fells, and all must needs ride slower: &then the Carline came sidling up to the Maiden, and saw how wan and woebegone was her face, & asked what ailed her; and she answered faintly at first, and then clearer and louder: It is because I am thinking of him and his woe; & I wot well that now, so soon as the battle is over, there shall he stand vet & look over the flood on to the field of deed, as if he were seeking after me dead amongst the corpses of the foe. Hnd to/morrow he shall come down to the water's edge while the dead yet lie

bids her take comfort

The Carline there, and stand looking to see if I be not coming to meet him, as now I have been wont so many years. And the more rowof that morrow will be come, yea, & many a morrow, till his heart shall be outworn with longing and grief, and he will go away out of the Dale to escape from his sorrow, and shall nowise escape it. Hh, & howshall I know whither he will wend, or the place of the shiftingdwellingofhis wanderings? Hnd I, and I, I wend away from him.

ORE grieved was the Carline at her grief, and she said: O, my child, I pray thee keep up a good heart within thee, lest thou die of sorrow, and endure not the chances of the meeting. Who knows whether thou be wending away from him? Nay, to my mind thou art wending toward him, & he to thee; for never had ye come together hadst thou abided in thine old home and he in his.

To the Maiden wept. But there, with rode along by them one of the men, and smote the Carline on the shoulders with his spear/staff, and bade her hold her peace, & not go They pass on like a crazy hen. So they rode their ways till they had passed the straiter part of the pass that led through the fells, and there night began to fall on them (it was April/tide in those days); so the men/at/arms chose a place where was grass and water and three thick

en amidst her grief, so weary as she was. And when morning was they fared on, after a short tarrying for breakfast, whereof they gave of the best they had to the Maiden, but nought at all to the Carline. Nevertheless, when her foster, ling fed her kindly from her abundance

they naysaid it not.

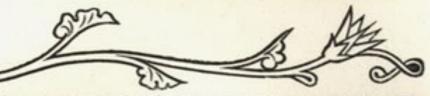
them (it was April/tide in those days);
so the men/at/arms chose a place where
was grass and water and three thick
thorn/bushes, and made their harbour
there. They took some pains to dight
a shelter for the Maiden by spreading
cloths betwixt a thorn & their spears
stuck into the ground, but to the Carline, as was like, they gave no heed. But
she laid her down peaceably within call
of her dear fosterling, muttering as her
head fell back: here at any rate it is over/
soon; let us get out of the mountains
first @ So they slept, yea, even the Maid/

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They ride long and late

his day is nought to tell of: towards sunset they came out of the mountains into a very fair green plain, wherein were neat and sheep a many; but though there were not a few houses of the herdsmen about, they made not for any of them, but took harbour in a little copse by a stream/side, and supped of such meat asthey had; save that two of them rode out into the plain and drove back with them a milch/cow, which they milked then & there for the Maiden's behoof. he next day they rode across the plain, and here and there fell in with some of the herdsmen by the way; but small greeting passed betwixt them, & the country folk seemed well pleased that the men, at arms had little to say to them. Before evening was they rode off the plain & into a land of little hills & streams, with green meadows for the most part, but here and there a little tillage, and a good many houses, yet these but the cots of the husband men. This day they rode long and late, yea, till it had been dark night but for

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the rising of the moon upon them. Ht The tent in last said one of the men to another: the valley Meshall not do it tomight; letus rest. and come in fresh armorning tide Soagain that night they had the shelter of the trees and the fields, but on the morrow betimes they were up and rode forward.

Chapter LIV. The Blue Knight buys the Maiden of the Chapman A

DEY had ridden scarce a three hours ere they came throughacleft in the hills which were grown somewhat higher and straiter, on to a very fair little val-

ley, well grassed, and with a stream of clear water running through it; and amidstof the said valley a fair white par vilion pitched, but no coatrarmour done thereon. Then quothone of themen to the Carline: Lo, dame, how likest thou the sight of our master's journeyhouse? Meseems in an hour's time thou shalt be well on thy journey to hell The other men laughed, but the Carline answered them nought.



The Chapman

O down they went, and as they drewnigher they saw a tall black, bearded man standing before the tent/door, and presently knew him for the Chapman who had been such an ill guest to them at their own house. And the Maiden quaked and turned pale at thesightofhim.ButtheCarlinespake to her under her breath and said: fear not, we shall not abide long with this one. Now he came forward to meet them; but when he saw the Carline he cried out wrathfully to his men & said: Why have ye brought this accursed hag with you over all these many miles of way? Now must she be hewn down bere, and her carcass will lie stinking at our door @ The men said nought, but sat in their saddles staring stupidly at him. But the Carline looked him bard in the face, & again made that muttering & the passing of her hands to and fro. The Chapman said nought for awhile, and then he spoke in a lower voice, wherein his pride seemed abated, &said: Well, afterall, the Damselmust needs have some woman to wait upon her, and this one shall serve our turn The Carline for the present. ho yel come and take sits watchthese women off their horses, and take ing them into the inner tent and give them to eat, and then let them rest . Then came forward two serving, men, who bore short/swords by their sides, and led the Carline & the Maiden through the big tent into the lesserone, & there brought water for their hands, & then victual and drink, and waited on them with honour; and the Carline laughed &said: Lo, my dear, here am I an honour, ed guest instead of a stinking corpse. Seest thou, the old woman is still good for something, & always to serve thee &help thee, my dear & Then the Maid en kissed the Carline and caressed ber, not without tears, & presently, being very weary with the way & the sorrow, laid her down on the bed & fell asleep. ButtheCarlinesatwatchingheedfully all that went on, setting her eye to the defaults between the cloths of the tent. so that she could see all that was toward in the big tent, and somewhat the goings on without.

The Chapman's longing is bated

om it must be said the Chapman, for as eager as had been his lust after the Maiden when he sawher at her house, found it some, what abated when he saw her lighted down from her nag at his tent door. forsooth she was worn with the travel, & yet more with the overmuch sorrow, so that she looked wan & haggard, and hesaid to himself that of all her beauty there was nought but the eyes of her left. But he thought: Let herrestalittle, and be by herself if she will, & have good and pleasant meat & drink, and not be worried and troubled; and I will withhold the heat of my longing, and then in a day or two it will all come back again So he bade his varlets deal with her as ye have heard, and suffered her to have the fellowship of the Carline ber friend.

noon the Chapman and his men saw the riding of folk; so they looked to their weapons, & presently came riding up to the tent a Knight in bright armour, and two men/at/arms,

and all of them right well arrayed. The The Blue Knight bore on his coat armour wavy Knight of blue and white, and he looked like to be a proper man of his hands.

when he had drawn rein at A the tent door, and saw the men standing to their arms thereby, he seemed to be not thinking of battle with them, but he said: The sele of the day to the men. Which of you is the master? @ Then came forward the Chapman, & sheathed his sword and said: Thatam I, Sir Knight; & tomake a long story short, I am no warrior or fighting man, but a merchant seeking gain from town to town and house to house. And I have some pretty things amongst my packs. Might I ask of your valour what thou wouldst have of me?

he Knight, who by this time was off his horse, laughed and said: Well, first we three would have meat and drink of you, & some horsemeat also, for we have ridden far this morning; & next, meseems, after what thou hast said, that it would help the

and talk together

They eat victual down if I were to turn over some of those dear/bought and far/fetched wares of thine, even if I have to pay for

peeping.

50 then was full of smiles & soft words save the Chapman; he bade the Knight into his tent most sweetly, and set his folk todighting anoble dinner. The Knight entered & did off his basnet, & showed a well-looked face, with good grey eyes like a hawk, and dark hair curling close to his head; there was nought cruel or base to be seen in his visage, though it had the fierceness of the warrior. So they sat down to meat, and talked the while of their eating; & agood deal of their talk was concerning the Knight of Longshaw, Sir Godrick, and his up, rising, and what his chances might be of his outfacing all his foes, who, said the Chapman, were many and great, and more belike than Sir Godrick wotted of. Quoth he: And glad shall I be if he be overborne: for what should a knight do. to set him up against great and noble men, and wage all kinds of

Of Longshaw and his foes

rascaile on behoof of a set of villeins and handicraftsmen! Hand he looked on his guest as if he deemed he should please him by that word; but the other shook his head and said: So should I not be glad; for Sir Godrick is both fearless and wise, & of good heart to such as need help. Yet I doubt me that he will be overthrown at last, such might as is arrayed against him. for sooth could he get to him two or three like to himself, yea, or were it only one, then might he endure; but where shall he find such an one?

bear the man such love & honour, mightest not thou thyself
give thyself to him & be such an one to
him as thou tellest of? The Knight
laughed: Chapman, said he, of such
mere skull/splitters as I be hath he en/
ough amongst his men/at/arms, who,
I must tell thee, be nowise rascaile, but
valiant & well/ordered warriors. What
he needeth is one fulfilled of the wisdom of war; yea, and of peace also, so
as to know when to hold fast & when

The Chapman opens his packs when to cast the golden bridge before them. Of such wisdom have I nought, and know little but of hard hitting and how to keep the face to the foe in the stour. Moreover, though in a way I wish him good/hap, yet is it such good/hap as one wishes a man who must needs be a foe. for I must tell thee that I am of the Barons' company and against Sir Godrick. Yet this I know, that if he fall at the last it shall not be till after he hath put us to the worse more than once or twice.

ed else, whither; but all this the Carline heard, & stored it up in her breast, & thought that she might hereafter get more tidings of Sir God, rick, and belike piece one thing to another till she had got somewhat which should be to her purpose.

the Chapman opened some of his packs before the Knight, who is here called the Blue Knight, and the Knight cheapened here an ouch & there

afingeriring or a gold chain, and a piece The Carline of Saracen silk, and so forth; and all dights the these he paid for down on the nail in Maiden pennies good and true, for he had with him a big pouch of money. Said he: Thou seest I am rich in spending silver, for I have been paid the ransom of three knights whom I took in sharp

stour last autumn.

at now as he was sitting turning over his fairings, a tidings befell. for the Carline, having well considered the looks of the Knight and having hearkened heedfully his speech, deemed that deliverance might come of him from the sordid wretch who had stolen the Maiden. So while the two were yet at table she roused her fosterling, & dight her attire as seem, ly as she might, and tired her hair and made it smooth and sleek; and just as the Blue Knight was about doing his marketings together, she brought the Maiden to the entry between the two tents and bade her stand there, & then drew the hangings apart to right and left and let the Maiden stand there as

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The Knight asks if she be thrall

in a picture. The Knight looked up and sawit, and stared astonished, and was wordless awhile; the Chapman scowled, but durst not say aught, for he knew not how the Knight would take it; and as for the Knight, he leaned across to the Chapman and spake to him softly, not taking his eyes off the Maiden the while: Chapman, wilt thou tell me what this is, this wonder of women? whether is it a queen of some far country, or an image made by wizardry? @ The Chapman, taken at unawares, had no lie handy, so he said: This is my war, taken thrall, and she bath been with me but some three hours & Said the Knight, stillspeakingsoftly: Thy thrall? Then mayst do with her what thou wilt. Tell me, wilt thou not sell her, and to me? The Chapman was somewhat slow to answer, for he feared the Knight, and durst not buy the slaking of his lust with the peril of death. And moreover he deemed it a thing to be looked for that, if he sold her not, the bold Knight would take her from him perforce, so that he should lose both wealth and woman. Hgain, it came into his mind he speaks that if he sold her he might yet take an to the occasion to steal her again; so he said in a surly voice: I took her not to sell her again, but to keep her and make her one of my household & Yea, said the Knight, and wilt thou bring her to the church and wed her before the priest with ring and book? The Chapman answered nought, and the Knight held his peace awhile; but presently he spake to the Maiden kindly, and said: Sweet Maiden, wouldst thou draw nigher to me, for I would speak with thee? Then she left the fold of the tent and came & stood before him with no fear in her eyes @ Said the Blue Knight: Tell me, fair damsel, is it true what this man says, that thou art his war taken thrall? Said she: Three days ago I was stolen from mine own home by this man's servants while the stout men of my folk were in battle with a sort of reivers who had fallen on our land. How might we defend us, two

weak women against three weaponed

Maiden

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men?

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he asks will she go with him

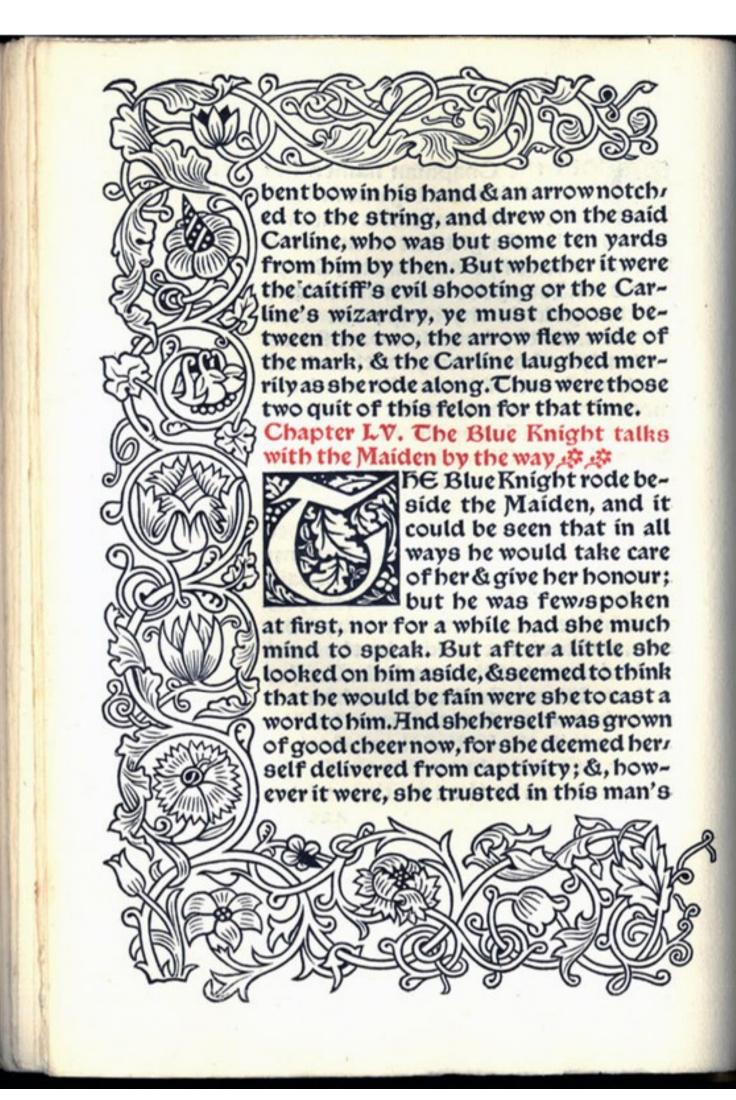
BERT thou thrall or free before that day, damsel? said sthe Knight She flushed red, and said: Never has there been an unfree man of our blood for generation after generation Said the Knight: Now thou art here in this man's tent, wilt thou go with him freely & of thine own will, if he swear to thee to take thee into his household and deal honestly by thee? @ She reddened again: But he will not deal honestly by me, lord, she said, & never will I go with him uncompelled. Flow knowest thou that be is not a true man? said the Knight. . Fair sir, she said, hast thou looked in the face of him? Look now with what eyes he is beholding me!

while; then he said, but halted in his speech: And with me: wouldst thou go with me of thine own free will, if I swore to deal with thee in all honour? Yea, she said, or without the swearing if thou make me the same offer after I have said a word to thee; to wit, that there is a young & goodly

man whom I love, & he me again. And The Maiden now I have lost him, and knownot how consents to come to him; but I will seek him the thereto world over till I find him, & he me. Hnd if I find him not, then never shall I come into any man's arms in this world. What sayest thou now? The Knight rose up and walked to and fro awhile, casting a look on the Chapman every now & then. At last he came to the Maiden, and said to her in a low voice: I make thee the same offer, and will swear to thee on my father's sword, which here is She looked on him, and the tears came into her eyes; nor forsooth were they very far from his. But she said: This goes with it, that thou take along with thee my foster/mother, who is hereby, and suffer her to be ever with me if I will F That is soon yeasaid, quoth he. Then he set her down in his chair, and said: fear nothing, I will see to this matter straightway.

BEN he turned to the Chapman, who sat scowling on the Maiden, & said: Now, Chapman, wilt thou sell me thy thrall as thou hast sold me The Chapman shall sell his thrall those pretty things? The other answered him notawhile, and the Knight said: Nay, it avails nought to draw faces at me; one way or the other the thing can soon be settled. for look to it, that thy war taken thrall may be mine by the same title. There are weapons enough hereby, and yeare five & wethree; & thou shalt arm thee, or I will unarm me to my kirtle and sword, & then let us out on to the green and fight for the Maiden & The Chapman said: I see thou wilt take her perforce; so give me her price. But take heed that I sell her not uncompelled. And thou who bast eaten & drunk with mel @ I would I might vomit up thy victuals, said the Knight angrily; for then I knew not that it was thy wont to carry off free women from their houses while other folk were fighting. But I will have no more words with thee, save this, that thoushalt sell mealso two of thy nags, that we may all ride and be away hence the speedier. To, Robert, go thou and take two fresh horses of the Chapman and saddle them straightway.

sou the Chapman named his benames price, & it was a big one indeed, a price no less than an earl's ransom: but the Blue Knight but nodded his head in token of yeasay, and the Chap, man said: I suppose thou wilt not have all that gold in thy scrip; but thou mayst take thy bargain away, for as violently and strifefully as thou hast dealt with me, if thou wilt send the money in one month's frist to the hose telry of the Moolpack in the good town of West Cheaping hard by here, and let thy bearerask for Gregory has lock to give him quittance. But for thine illidealings with me I shall give thee no quittance, but shall watch my turn to do theeaservice The Knight said all shortly: I shall send thy money as thou biddest: &then turned away from him, and took the Maiden by the hand and led her out of the tent, & the Carline followed them. So they gat to horse & rode their ways. But so it was that the Carline rode the last of them: & when they were gone but a few yards the Chapman ran to the tent door with a



good faith and kindness. So sheasked They talk him some simple question about the by the way way, and he started when he heard her voice, but turned & answered her frank, lv. & seemed as if he had liked it better if he might have made more of it. Then she said: fair sir, thou hast not yet told me whither we be going @ Nay, he said, that is true, & heedless it was of me, and I pray thee pardon me. The be boun for the Castle of Brookside. which is my chiefest manor house, though no great things. But we shall not be there to night, nor for many nights. Now if thou ask me what we shall find there, I shall tell thee that beside the serving, men and a few men, atrarms & sergeants, & three squires, thou shalt find little save my mother there, for I am unwedded as yet.

that word the Maiden fell sir lent again, for she was won-dering what like would be the Knight's mother, and what days she was like to make for her. But presently she set that all aside, & fell to ask the Knight of other matters, such as the

in a walled grange

They sleep fashion of the country side & the ways of the folk round about his castle, and freely he answered to everything; and so at last began to ask her concerning her land & folk, & her way of life, and she told him of all freely. But no word did she say to him of the man whom she loved; nay, when the talk seemed drawing near to such a point that it seemed he must be told of presently, she would break off and hold her peace straightway; neither did the Knight say aught, nor ask her wherefore she went not on with her tale, but let speech be till the spring thereof began to run again of its own will.

has then they wore the day, riding through a fair country of husbandry, not very thickly housed. None meddled with them, till at sunset they came to a goodly grange walled and moated: & the Blue Knight said: If we take not harbour here we shall have to lie out in the field, for we shall fall in with noother house till the nightiswell deep Therewith herode up to the door and lighted down, and

so did they all; and there came forth a They take tall & somewhat goodly man of some to the road fifty winters and bade Welcome, Sir Mark @ And without more ado they entered the hall, which was fair bigand well-plenished. There presently they were feasted by the goodman and his sons & his folk, for Sir Mark the Blue Knight was well known to the said goodman. In due time withalthe Maid, en was shown to a fair chamber well hung & with a good bed therein, where in she slept sweet without dreams. So was the ending of that day better than the beginning. They took to their road betimes on the morrow, and two of the goodman's sons and three of his men rodewith them, wellarmed; for though this was a peopled part, yet whiles reiv, ers rode therein. But on the way the Blue Knight excused him to the Maid enfor suffering this eking of his army, & he said: Seest thou, lady, were I with my two lads here, or even were I riding birdalone, I would have bidden these five good fellows abide at home; but I fear for thee, lest the fewness of our

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Sir Mark speaks privily with the Maiden to come within smiting distance, and then who knows what might betide? for a chance stroke might doall the scathe at once, and make me an unhappy man

till the end of my days.

The smiled on him friendly and said: Sir Knight, there is no need to excuse thee; trust me Lam nowise greedy of battle, and thank thee heartily for thinking of me. The Knight made as if he would have said something which would not come forth of his mouth, and he turned very red, and so rode, but presently drew rein, and bade the others ride on and he would catch up with them. So they went on, and the Maiden would have ridden on also, but he said: I beseech thee to abide with me, for I have a word or two to say to thee before we get on with this day's journey & She looked on him wonderingly, & was somewhat abashed, but turned to hearken to him; and hesaid, not speaking very glibly: Thou thankest me for thinking of thee, but meseems I have now ise thought of thee enough. I have told thee that we beride ing to my house of Brookside, but now I will ask thee if thou hast will to go

heasks would she go back to the Dale

thither? @ Why not? she said; I deem not by thy looks and thy speech that thou wilt be hard or cruel with me, or do me wrong in any wise, or suffer oth, ers so to do Nay, by Hlhallows, said he; but this I ask. Tell me right out if thou hast any will to go back to thine old home in the Dale. I beseech thee to tell me thy mind hereon; and if thou longest to go back, then will we turn bridle at once and seek to the stead where thou wert born and bred. & there will I say farewell to thee. for what it may not be for ever; I shall ride to see thee once and again I promise thee.

Om the Maiden flushed red and the tears gathered in her eyes, and she looked piteous kindon him; but she said: Thou art kind indeed: but that farewell in the Daleneed eth not to be, for I have no will to go back home. Such an errand is laid on me that hath made me homeless now; for I must go seeking that which is lost,

They join their company it may be, wide over the world; & if thou wilt shelter me a while in Brookside Castle I shall thank thee & bless thee as scarce a man bath yet been thanked since earth was new.

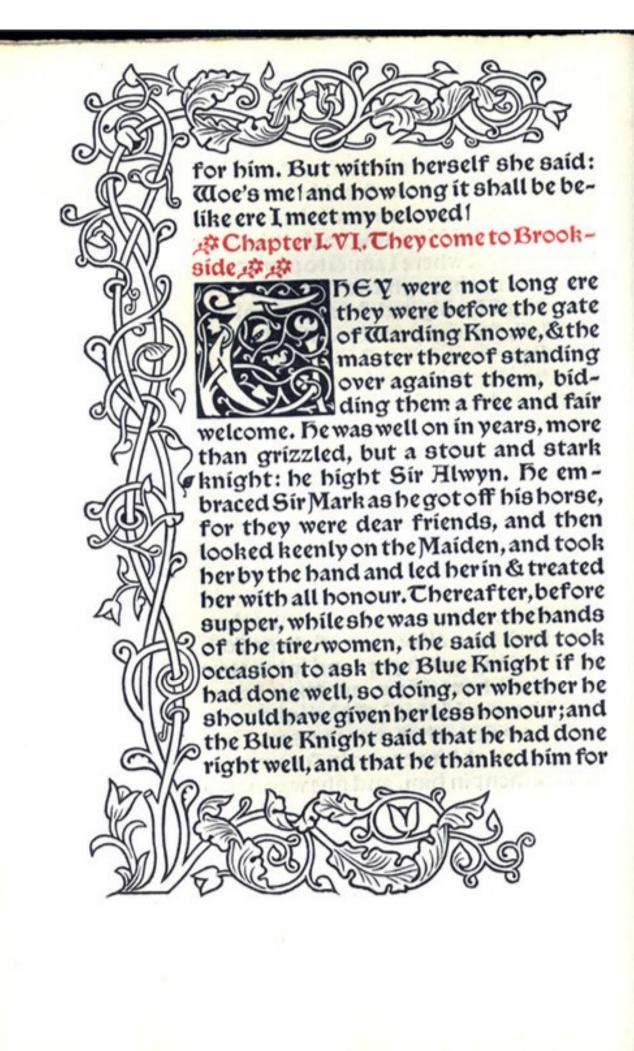
but presently heraised it, & heave ed a sigh as if a weight were lifted from his heart, & he said: Let each of us take what content may be in the passing days. Then he shook his rein, and they both sped on together till they caught up with their company.

ahusbandman's cot, where was no room save for the two women, & the men lay out under the bare heaven, but all was done that might be for the easement of the Maiden. The franklin's folk rode on with them on the morrow, & whereas they must needs wend a somewhat thick wood the more part of the day, they rode close, & had the Maiden in their midst, while the Blue Knight went the foremost of their company, and was as wary as might be. So whatever strong thieves might

have been lurking under cover of the thicket, they adventured them not against so stout & well-ordered a company, and they all came safely through the wood into a fair grassy valley some little time before sunset. But though the pasture was good there & the land well watered, there were no houses with, in sight, for it was overligh to the wood for folk to venture their goods, yea & their lives, by dwelling in neighbourhood to such ill men as haunted the thickets of the forest. Wherefore this night all the company, women as well as men, must needs forego lying under rafters; albeit they dight some kind of a tent with what cloths they had for the Maiden and her fosterer. The fourth day, as they rode the fair grassy valley, as it was noon, they saw somewhat aloof the riding of another company, which they deemed to be more than they. So they looked to their wear ponsandrode on steadily, but without haste, lest the others might deem they were fleeing them. So the others, when they had well espied their demean-

They see another company riding The newcomers ride on their way our, passed on without meddling with them. Wellmighthe whole valley could be ridden, so there was nought to drive them to meet side by side in a strait road, wherefore they came not very nigh, but yet nigh enough to know the newcomers for such as would be evil wayfellows to any whom they feared not. Hs it was, the Blue Knight & his drew rein and turned a little toward them as they went by, to show that they feared them not, & Sir Mark rode forward ber fore his folk & abode them with sword in fist. But the newcomers did nought but set up a yelling & jeering, and rode on their way not over slowly. Three bours thereafter they saw, a little mile aloof, a fair white house garnished with towers on a knoll, round about which ran a little river; so the Maiden, who was now again riding close beside the Blue Knight, asked him if that were Brookside, & hesmiled and said: Nav.my house is still five days' ride away, but this house, which hight Ward, ing Knowe, is the house of a friend, & there shall we have good guesting,

whereof I rejoice for thy sake Then Sir Mark bewassilent awhile, & said thereafter: loves the Tell me, lady, dost thou wish those five Maiden days over? Nay, she said, it is little matter tome where Iam; & to say sooth, this riding through the fair land likes me well Fre sighed & said, yet slowly: Well, for my part I would that the five days were fifty @ Mhy? she said heedlessly Fre reddened and said: I must needs tell thee since thou askest me. It is because I have got used to seeing these men & thy Carline about thee; neither does it irk me to see the folk that give us guesting gazing on thee or speaking to thee. But when we come to Brookside it will be all other than that; for there will be the folk all about, & some belike will make friends with thee; & there will be my mother. And look you, all & each of these folk shall have as much part and lot in thee as I shall have. Now, art thou angry that I have said this? Nay, she said, and knew not what more to say. And she looked at him covertly & saw grief and torment in him, and she was sorry ff 433



The talk falls on Sir Godrick

it, for of all honour was she worthy. Mod the Maiden sat at table beside the lord and Sir Mark, and bearkened their talk, which at one time ran much upon that great captain of war whom they called Sir Godrick of Longshaw. And she might see of both of them that they thought much of his wisdom, & not little of his luck, & feared him what he would do to them of the Barons' League, whereof were both those knights. And Sir Alwyn furthermore told the Blue Knight concerning tidings in the City of the Sundering flood, & said that the King thereof was of little account before such a man as was Sir Godrick, for though he were well enough in a fray, if the sword were put into his hand & the horse were between his knees, yet was he feather/headed, stubborn in wrong, and hard/hearted. Said Sir Alwyn, that save the said King was in all things according with the best men of the City, as the Porte and the Masters of the Great Crafts, he was undone. Then he said again: Yea, and there is ff2 435

There are not two Sir Godricks

talk also how that the Small Crafts have in their hearts to rise against both Porteand King, and certes if they may have Sir Godrick on their side, which is not wholly unlike, they will perchance come to their above: and then again is the King's cake but dough & Said Sir Mark, and smiled withal: One thing we have to our comfort, that there may not lightly be found two Sir Godricks. and though his men be fell fighters. therewhere he is only shall his luck prevail to the full @ Yea, said the houselord; but I can see in the eye of my mind another well-nigh as good as he, if he might but hit upon him. Yea & one who should be even better than his double, filling up what little lacks theremay be in him; one who should cheer the heart of his host as much even as the captain, and yet should be liker to the men themselves, and a part of them in all wise.

HID Sir Mark: Even so much as this I said a day or two ago. Yet scarce is such an one found by seeking Sooth is that, said Sir Al-

wyn, but such like haps drift toward The Carline the lucky.

asks a ques tion

The talk thereof dropped down in a while; but the Carline, who had been shown to a good seat not far off, heard all this, & said to herself: I wonder if this old knight is somewhat wise of foresight, for surely along the same road bendeth my mind. @ And afterwards, the next morning, when as it happed the Carline was stand ing close to the lord, & they two alone, she said to him: Lord, might an old & feeble woman ask of thy wisdom with, out rebuke if thou hast any inkling of what thine end shall be? Fe looked hard on her and said: Dame, I note of thee that thou hast some foresight of things to come, and thou art old as I am, therefore to thee will I tell it, as I would to none other, that I shall fall in battle, and in that said battle our backs shall be turned toward the foe and our faces toward the world beyond; and this shall be ere the earth is eighteen months older @ So she thanked him, and they parted.

They take leave of Sir Hlwyn

had hearkened heedfully to the talk of the two knights, & some, thing went to her heart as they talked about a meet fellow for this great captain, and she said to herself: Ah! and where shall such a man be on the earth, if it be not he whom no man friendly may see without his heart being drawn to him? whom no foe may see without casting aside hope of victory? the wise one, while yet aboy, of the war of East Cheaping, the frank and the fair, and mine own love who is seeking me?

departed with all good wish, departed with all good wish, es from Warding Knowe, and the franklin's men turned back home; for Sir Alwyn's stronghold was as a bar against the strong, thieves of the forest and thereabout. But the others went forward toward Brookside: nor is there much to tell of their journey; for the most part they guested at the houses of the husbandmen, or whiles at a franklin's or yeoman's house, and none begrudged them the harbour and

victual; but the poor folk Sir Mark paid The Castle largely therefor. Ht last, on the ninth of Brookday as it grew toward dusk, and they side had been riding a land of little hills. with some deal of woodland betwixt the meadows so that they might see no great way ahead, they saw but a half mile aloof a hill nowise high, & before it a little river bridged with a goodly stone bridge; and on the said hill was a long house, defensible by reason of its towers & walls, yet nomere strong, hold, but a goodly dwelling. Then Sir Mark raised his hand and pointed to it, and said to the Maiden: Lady, yonder is Brookside, my poor house, where I would have thee dwell so long as it pleases thee Then he drew forth his born and said: We will sing a little to them, for it will be in their minds to ride out some of them to meet us. & I would not balk their good will @ There with he set his born to his mouth and

blew a long & loud blast, wherein were strange changes and quirks, so that it might be known for his music: & then they rode on slowly, and presently a

folk ride them

banner of the blue & white waves came out to meet out from a high tower, and therewithal from out the Castlergate came forth a score of folk ashorsesback and rode swiftly down to the bridge. Then Sir Mark said: Now light we down & meet the rest on this pleasant greensward, for they will like it better to come on us thus, so that they may have the better and the higher sight of us; & though there be little shade of trees here, yet this cool hour before the twilight all green places be pleasant this fair day. Deven as he bade so did they, and it was anigh to the bridge, so that it was but a few minutes ere that folk were riding over toward them, & the Maiden could see at once of them that they were merry, faced & gay, clad. The two that rode first were young men, & one slim & very goodly, with the hair of his head plenteous & waving and brown. and little hair upon his pleasant, happy young face. he threw himself off his horse at once and ran straight up to the Blue Knight, & made obeisance to him, & took his hand and kissed it: but

the Knight laid his hands on to his The two shoulders and shook him and rolled squires him about, looking kindly in his face the while, and then he cried out: Da. Roland by St. Christopher, but thou art glad to see me, lad! Is all well up there? Hil is well, Sir Mark, said the youngling, and I am like to be glad to see thee back safe & sound, when who knows what folly thou wilt have been mixed up with, so that thou may st well be brought home any day between the four corners: and all is well up yonder. Bhark to the prudence of the sage & the grey/beard, said Sir Mark, laughing. Yet I must tell thee, and all of you, that I have had an adventure. But here is Tames and his greeting. Now this was the other young man, who got off his horse in less haste and came up slower to his lord, and as he went cast an eve on the Maiden, who had risen up tomeet the newcomers and was stand ing there simply and somewhat shyly; and as the young man beheld her he blushed red and cast his eyes down. he was not so fair a youth as the other,

They are abashed before the Maiden

tall and stark, redibaired, the bair cut short to his head, yet no ill looked man neither, greyieved & firmilipped. The Knight took him kindly by the hands and greeted him, and then he turned to the Maiden, & took each of the young men by a hand & led them before her, and said: fair lady, these two, who will ere long be knights, are mysquires/of/ arms, who love me who livand are good menand true, and perilous in the stour to them that love me not. Now I pray thee be as kind to them as thou wilt, yet as I am, to wit, ruling them well, & making them run and return for thee, and giving them but little of their will. And he laughed therewith.

James knelt down before her, & would have kissed her hand but she reached it not to him. But if James were abashed when he first cast eyes on her, how was it now with Roland? he turned red indeed, & made no obeisance to her, but stood

BUT the other folk gathered round Sir Mark them to get the Blue Knight's greeting, and also, sooth to say, to gaze upon the Maiden. And when the Knight had taken the welcome of

tells the Maiden's

them with many kind words, he said in a loud voice so that all could hear: Squires & sergeants & men at arms. this is the adventure that I have had, that I came upon this lady in the hands of a caitiff who had set his men to steal ber while others held her kinsmen and folk in battle, & now called her his war, taken thrall. And whereas he was a craven and would not fight for her, I must needs buy her of him, though I bade him battle in all honour; and fain am I that he took it not, for the slaying of such dogs is but dirty work. But heark, en, though I have bought this lady at a price, it was to make her her own and not mine, &of her own will has she come hither to my house. But I think on the way thither she has become somewhat my friend in all kindness and honour, and I deem that to you also she will be a friend while she dwells with us, & if

ber obeisance

They all do ye be less than friendly with her, then are ye hewn out of far other wood than I be. But all this I have told you that there may be no slander or backbiting, ordeeming of evil whereas none is; yea, and no deeming of guile or mystery in the tale, but all may be plain and outspoken @ They gave forth a murmur of yeasay and welcome when he had done, and the Maiden deemed that they looked as if they loved and trusted the Knight. But therewith one and all of them came before her and knelt to her and did her obeisance, and she looked full kindly on them, for she deemed all this good and happy. And yet she said to herself: If it could be that I could forget him or the search for him, how should I one day awaken when all was lost & curse myself But she heard the Blue Knight say: James & Roland, I would have you prevent us and go up to the Castle, & go to my Lady mother in her chamber and tell her hereof, how I have come home, and all that ye have seen and heard But the Maiden won, dered somewhat, for looking now on

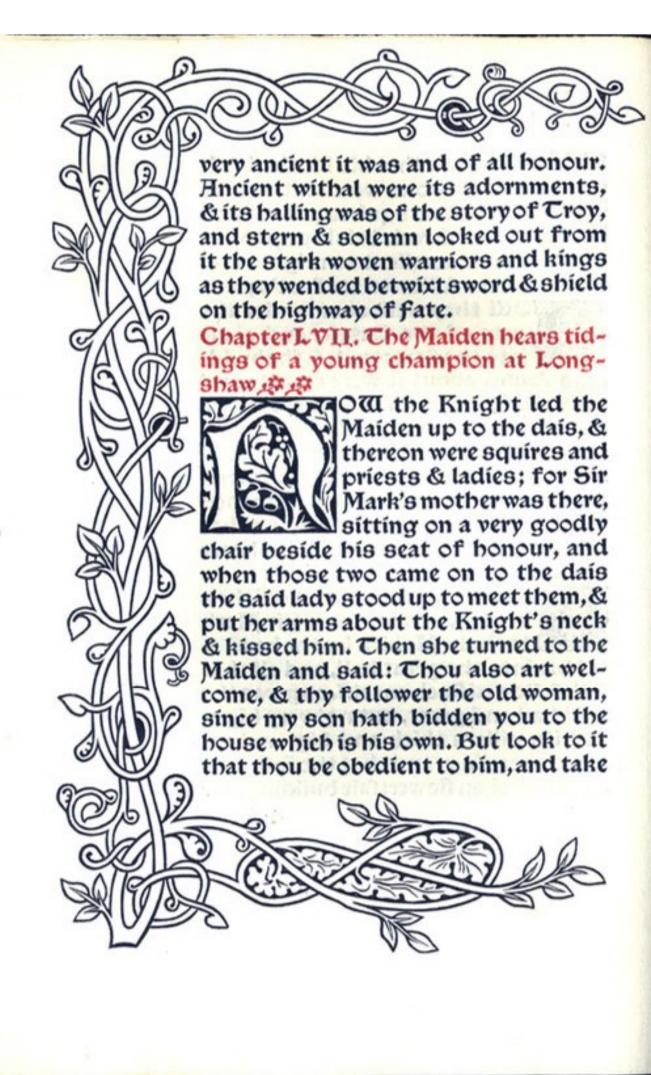
Sir Mark she saw that his face had red, They enter dened and his brows were knit.

the Castle

MUT the two squires got to their horses & rode briskly up to the Castle as silent as might be, & all the others followed at a foot's pace.

they were soon under the gate of the Castle, and came into the forecourt, & the build, ings round about it were goodly and great, but not very new. There were a many weaponed men in the said court, all come together to welcome their lord and his fellowship, and they clattered theirspears on theirshields, & tossed their swords aloft & shouted, so that the Maiden's eyes glittered & her heart beat quick.

WARDEN they were off their horses, straightway Sir Mark took the Maiden by the hand & led her into the great hall, and all that folk followed flock/meal. Long was the said hall and great, but not very high, and its pillars thick and big, and its arches beetling; and that the folk loved better than flower/fair building, for



e come to the Maiden

more heed of his honour & his welfare than thine own welfare; then shall I give thee what honour thou art worthy of, and thou shalt find in me a well-willer.

the Maiden knelt before her & kissed her hand, but the lady looked no more on her, but on her son. She was a tall and goodly woman of some five &fifty winters; hawki nosed and hawkreyed, darkrhaired, & her hair waved as the coatrarmour of the house. She spoke in no very soft or kind voice, not even to her son, and the Maiden had feared her that while had it not been that even therewith her heart turned toward the man she loved and whom she sought, & all these that were round about her, even the valiant and generous Knight, had become for the time to her but images that had no part in her life.

her and led her into a chamber apart, and bathed her and clad

her in fair raiment and led her back into the hall, for so had the Blue Knight commanded.

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The Ladymother and Sir Mark S for the Carline, she was shown to a good place, & sat there heed, fully, & had ears for everything that was said and eyes for all that was done. And she said to herself that they should not abide there very long ere she would find out something of the way her bird must followif she were to have a happy life thenceforth.

mother took her son into a win, dow of the hall & fell to talking with him. And the Carline was not far off, and heard a good part of all that they said; for she was fine eared, & had brought lore to bear upon the heark-

ening.

so thou hast brought home a wor man of the husbandmen, a churl's daughter, to dwell with us. What wilt thou do with her? Wilt thou wed her with priest and ring? Nay, mother, said Sir Mark; but thou needest not call her of churl's blood. I wot of these folk of the dales under the mountains, that they are both proud and warrior-

like, as if they were earls' kindred @ New days Is it so? said the Lady. But she is nei- for the ther of the baronage nor the knight- Maiden hood. I say, wilt thou wed her? FI shallnot, said Sir Mark, reddening and knitting his brows @ What wilt thou dowith her then? said the Lady Said be: Sheshall abide bere in all bonour & kindness so long as she will @ Even such shall she have from me then, said the Lady, since it is thy will, so long as thy will is steadfast herein; but when it changes, then must we seek other

ped for that time.

EREthen began newdays for the Maiden, nor is it to be said that there was aught evil in them, save the abiding on hope deferred; for there was none in the house that looked not kindly on this lovely one, save it were the Lady, the mother of Sir Mark. But then, to say sooth, she looked not kindly on any, scarce even on her son, though in her heart she loved him strongly. And no wrong shedid to the Maiden, or put any tasks upon her, nor said nor did

rede So the talk between them drop-

gg 449

Sir Mark and the two squires aught covertly to make her heart bleed, as belike she might have done had she willed it. The two young squires, Roland and James, did all they might to be with her & have speech of her, and she suffered them frankly, seeing no harm therein. For to her they were but bright & fair youths whose lives had nought to do with hers, but who should find friends and loves and deeds with other folk whom she had never heard of, and in lands far away from the grey dale where she was born and bred.

different, for such thanks she owed him for her deliverance and for his kindness that never wore thin, & for the faithful love that looked for no reward, nay not even for pity of the love, for ever he bore him frank and merry, and had such kind goodwill to all folk worthy who were about him, that none had deemed of him but that he was heart, whole, & bore about no pain that fretted his life. So much she owed him, I say, yea and was glad to owe him, and so fain she was to hear

and see this friend, that scarce might she think of her life on the earth and he not a part of it in some way.

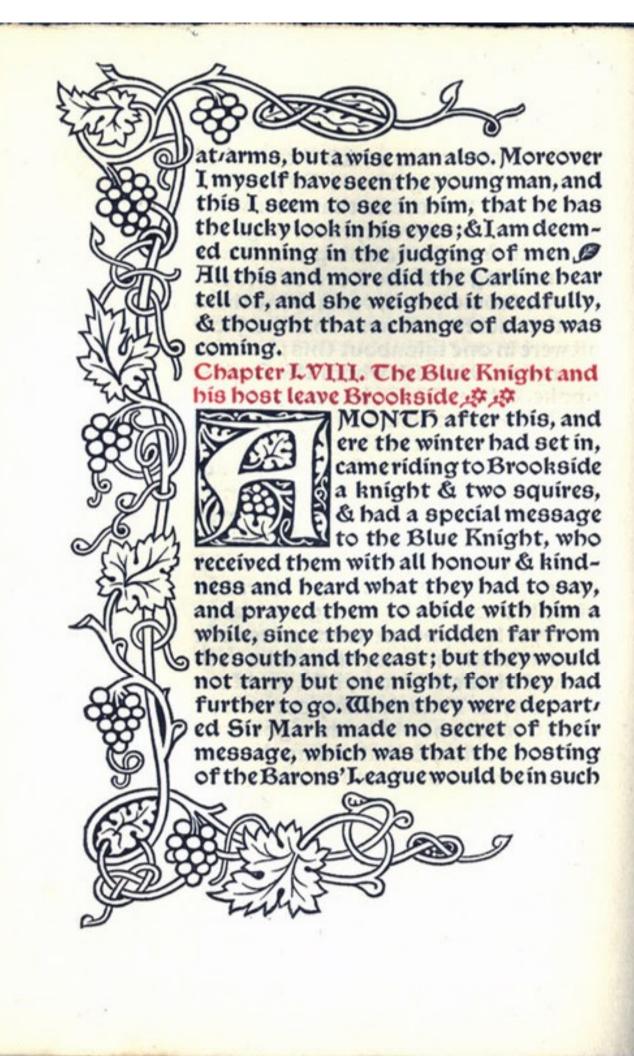
The days pass heavily and lightly

owore the spring and summer, and all seemed at peace about Brookside: & many merry days did the Maiden and the Carline share in, as riding in the meadows & woods with hawk and hound, & feasts in the fair land further aloof; and the Midsummer & Michaelmas markets, which were held in the meadow betwixt the Castle & the township of Brookside; & ariding more than two or three to the cheaping town of that country side, which was some five leagues distant & was a good & plenteous town. Withal a many folk came arguesting to the Castle, knowing it to be a guest/kind house, as pilgrims and chapmen, and knights & meniatiarms riding hither and thither on their errands, so that it was no unlikely place to hear tidings of the countries and kingdoms.

ND thus the days pass, sometimes lightly, but more ofttimes heavily enough, & summer wore The Carline buys news

to winter, winter to summer, and two years are over; and now when the aforesaid Michaelmas market was come again, great recourse was there of fartravelled and wise men, and the Carline, as was her wont each year, set herself diligently to learn all she might of such/likefolk. And she had wherewith al to buy wares of likely chapmen, and to treat meniatiarms & others to wine & banquet. for she had brought away with her a marvellous collar of gems, which the Maiden owned, and which, as she said, was the gift of the Dwarfs: & the Maiden consenting thereto, the Carline had sold three gems from the said collar, so that they lacked not money. Nowas to the tidings the Carline heard of, they had for the most part todowith the deeds and uprising of Sir Godrick of Longshaw, and how that the Barons of the lands that lav about would not endure his ways and his pride, and were levying war against him; and they said they knew for certain that, when spring came next year, they would be on him, & that they had

made a League into which they looked Sir Godrick to draw the King of the City of the has a new Sundering flood, and that meanwhile man the League was already most mightily manned, & so far reaching that it was a sure thing that the Lord of Brooksidehad come intoit, yea & even others further north and west than he. Now all were in one tale about this; but one man there was with whom the Carline spoke, & he neither the youngest nor least wise, who said: And yet, dame, I look for it that the Knight of Longshaw will yet give this League a troub, lous hank to unwind, so wise a man as he is, and so well accompanied by wise and lucky men; & now bath he gotten a new captain, a young man from far away up/country; & though there has since his coming been no great war afoot, yet hath this newcomer been one of certain adventures, wherein he hath proved himself. And by all I could see and hear, for I was dwelling seven days at Longshaw, he will be the right hand of Sir Godrick, & that means that the Knight deems of him as no mere man,



place, east of the water and far to the The Maiden south, a month before Marymass of is troubled next year; and they prayed him to be leal and true to the League, & gather to him what force he might, as wellarmed & formed in all ways as could be done. But be answered that he was all ready thereto, & should do his devoir to the uttermost of his power.

BEN the Maiden heard this she was troubled, and asked him what he deemed of the chances of the war; and he said: Lady, this is what we were talking of with the Lord of Marding Knowe that other day; & I must tell thee, though I shall go to the hosting merrily & expendme there to the utmost, yet I deem that they be the luckiest who may keep them out of this strife, as I may not & Yet, saidshe, be they not mighty men, these Barons? & allmen say that their League is well knit together; so that at the worst, if they overwhelm not the Knight of Longshaw, they may hold them well against him @ Lady, said he, by my deeming, if we crush not this valiant

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Sir Mark talks with her

man utterly he will scatter us; he is not such a man, if he have any force left, as may be held aloof, as a man will hold a fierce sheep/dog with a staff till the shepherd come. To end it, since I am saying this to none but thee. I seemyself so bestead that I shall deem me a lucky man if I bring back a whole skin from this war. It will be evil days for allofus, said she, if thou come not back hale & sound @ It gladdens my heart that thou shouldst say so, quoth he: & yet I would have thee look to it. that if we overthrow this wise man & good knight, & I say again that must be utterly or not at all, there will be more moan made over him than overadozen such as I: & that is no otherwise than it should be Said she: I would thou wert with him and not against him The Knight said kindly: Dear Maiden, thou must not say such words to me, for thou knowest that my partischos, en by my own will.

looked on him as one who understood and thought well of

him; and he began again: So it is that he tells of yonder knight/messenger told me, a- the new midst of his talk, that he had been but war,leader theother day to Longshaw under safe, conduct, and that there it was told him by one of the loose tongued & grudgingkind, as I deem, that Sir Godrick of Longshaw had gotten to him in these latter days a new captain, a man very young, & as it were a David to look on in the days before he slew the Philistine. furthermore, said this grudger, that though the said youth was a tall lad of his inches, and strong and wellknit, he was all untried, and vet was he shoving asideolder & well/proven men in the favour of the Knight of Longshaw. In short, the said grudger went on with his tale as though there were some big grievance against his master brewing in Longshaw, and our knight deemed that so it was, and that they would hold together the looser, & that thereby we should have the cheaper bar, gain of them. All of which I trow nowise, but deem, on the contrary, that I see in this glorious young man even

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busy

The Blue the one sent from heaven for the help-Knight is ing of our enemy, of whom I dreaded that he would come ere long time was worn. But now let all things be as they will that be not under my hand.

she flushed very red and her eyes glittered; for her heart was smitten by this tale of the young champion, and the thought sprang up suddenly: Tho then can this be save mine own beloved? But the talk between them fell.

ORE THE days then till the winter came upon them, and though the season was not hard, yet was there but little coming & going about the country/side, that is to say for long journeys; but even so the Blue Knight had his hands full of business in seeing to the gathering of men and stuff for the hosting of the Barons' League. But when March was athand, &theroads were dry, there was no need of further message to him, & belet it beknown to all and several that on the very first day of the month he

would depart before sunrise. And this he bids her he told to the Maiden specially, and by farewell this time she had got to look upon it as a thing already done, so that the news thereof took not much from her cheer, which, to say sooth, was but little.

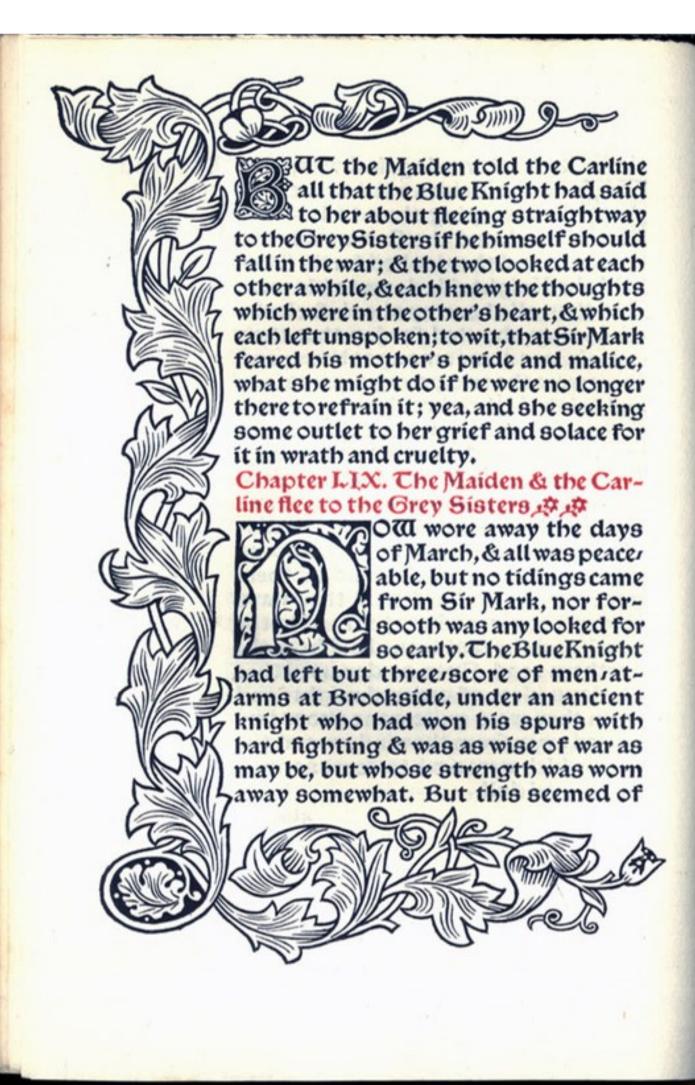
IGHTY was the hubbub & toil of their getting ready; but when the morning was come all was in good order, and the men and their wains and what not were all drawn up in array down on the little plain before the bridge, and they looked as if nothing might overthrow them, so stalwartthey were each man, & so well learn, ed to move as though they were one. The sun was not yet up ere there came a knock on the Maiden's door, and she, who was fully clad, & had been looking out of her window, whence she could see all the array, for a good while, went to the door and opened, and lof it was Sir Mark, fully armed save his head. She putouther hands to him and said: Thou hast come to say farewell to me. See, I have saved thee the pain of saying that word; soon may it be that I his rede to the Maiden

shall have to say Welcome back to he took her hands & kissed her face many times, and she suffered him. Then he said: Omy thanks to thee! Yet heark, en: If I come not back at all, when it is known for sure here that I am dead, then I rede thee make as little delay as thou mayest, but get thee gone at once, thou and thy nurse, from the pleasant house of Brookside, & go straight to the house of the Grey Sisters, which thou hast seen from without many a time, that lieth betwixt wood & water a seven miles down the river, and tell them that I have sent you & bid them to cherish you; then will they see to thy matters in the best way they know. Much more might I say, & I know that thou wouldst hearken me, but I must forbear, lest I soften my heart overmuch for this day and this hour.

back in a twinkling while she still stood at the door, and said to her: I tell thee it needeth but a little but that I should dooff this weed of war and a-bide at home while my men wend to bat.

tle. Then be turned again & was gone. MUT the Maiden went to the win, dow weeping thus to lose her friend, and the Carline came to her there, and they looked forth, & beheld the Knight ride down to his men. And then all the array shook & clashed, as they shouted for joy that their captain was come amongst them; and there were the two young squires, gay and bright in their broidered surcoats. & they fell into their places beside the lord, and Roland bore the wavy banner. Then arose the sun, and Sir Mark drew forth his sword & waved it aloft, and Roland shook the banner loose & displayed it in the clear air. The horns blew up, and the whole band of them got on to the bridge & went their ways toward the place where the road to the south and the east turned off from the northern road. Even so departed that glorious piece of ordered might; and when they were quite gone those two turned away from the window, and the days which were next to come seemed empty and dull.

The band starts in goodly array



little import, as none looked for any war, More news save it might be the riding of aband of comes to the strong, thieves, who would scarce try Castle the tall ramparts of Brookside, or had been speedily thrust aside had they so done. Yet did the seneschal look well to his gates, which were shut save for a few hours midmost of the day, and kept good watch & ward day,long and night/long. And few people were suffer ed to enter the Castle, save the neighbours who were well known, or now & again a wandering chapman; but such an one was ever put outrargates before sunset: and no one of these even made a show of giving any news of the coun, try of the war. But midmost of April came some news, such as it was, to wit, that the Barons' League had driven him of Longshaw out of the field by the mere terror of their host and the wind of its banners, and he had shut himselfup in Longshaw, whereto they were drawing speedily, and that the King of the City of the Sundering flood had brought his host into the field to help the Barons W Mhen the Castle folk

Joy and feasting in Brookside

heard this they doubted not but that the Lord of Longshaw was undone, and they were exceeding joyous thereof. But the Maiden, though she might hope the more to see her friend come back whole and sound, was unmerry at the tidings, she could scarce tell for why; neither did the Carline blame her therefor.

UT again, almost in the face of May, chapmen more than two or three brought tidings again, to wit, that all was done: Longshaw taken and ruined, the warriors thereof slain or scattered, &Sir Godrick brought to the heading/block in the King's City. Now great indeed was the joy in Brook, side, & great joy and feast they made; and the Lady of the Castle sat at the high/table, clad in golden garments, at a glorious banquet which was held every night of the octave of the day when they had first heard these good tidings. But when the Carline saw the sadness of the Maiden because of it. she said to her: Nay, nay, my child, put on a good countenance & up with thine

heart. for every tale is good till the Thenews is next one is told; and I must tell thee but hearsay that these last two who had this one in their mouths, the chapman and the canon to wit, I questioned them closely, first the two together, & then each one by himself, & methought I could see that they knew little more about it than we do, & were but carrying about empty hearsay, ever making the most of what they deemed we & they would like the best to hear. I would rather they had told us once more of the Hun, turs of King Arthur and Sir Gawain. The Maiden smiled at her word, and her heart was lightened, for it pleased her nought to think that this good Knight, Sir Godrick, whom her friend had so bepraised to her, should have been overcome and led to death by his foemen. Now after this they gat no tidings of any account till May was well on; and then none at all a long while, till at last June was come, & folk about

the Castle were getting fearful, lest

something untoward had befallen.

bb

Dorsemen ride to the Castle

Clast, on a hot & dry afternoon of June, when the Carline & the Maiden were together and had gotten leave to be without the gate, they saw a horseman come riding from the wood on the other side of the gate, with his head turned toward the Castle, and then another, & then two more. And as they drewnigher they could see that these were gaunt and tattered and in evil array, and they rode very slowly. And those two beheld them, and saw that no more came, and they wondered what they were. But at last, when they were close on the bridge, they saw only too well by the rags of their array & by the faces of two of them, whom they knew, that these were meniatiarms of Brookside. And the women stood still astonied and wist not what to do: and the men also drewup to them and then abode, and one, he whom they knew the best, spake to them in a harsh voice & said: God knows we have striven hard to save our lives this long while past. that there might be one or two left to tell the tale; but now it is not so sure 466

coming home alive. But we heed not, from the for we be foul like beasts and hungry war like beasts and weary like beasts. Let the beasts pass who were once men of Brookside Door men, said the Maiden kindly, veneed not wound your lips by telling me the tale, for I know it, to wit, the others are all slain and perished, and that your lord fell with all valiance in the very heat of the battle. O, woe is me for my friend 1 Hnd she wept. But the man stared at her wildly, as if he were astonied to hear the unused sweetness of her voice. But she said: Come now, & let me lead thee to thy fellows: maybe they will beastir now So she put her hand on his bri-

dle to lead him, and he followed without naysay, and the others after him. And they passed in under the gate: & by this time there were a score or more folk in the court, for they had seen the riding of men from the walls or windows. But lo, now the Maiden, when she looked about for the Carline, might see her nowhere. But even therewith

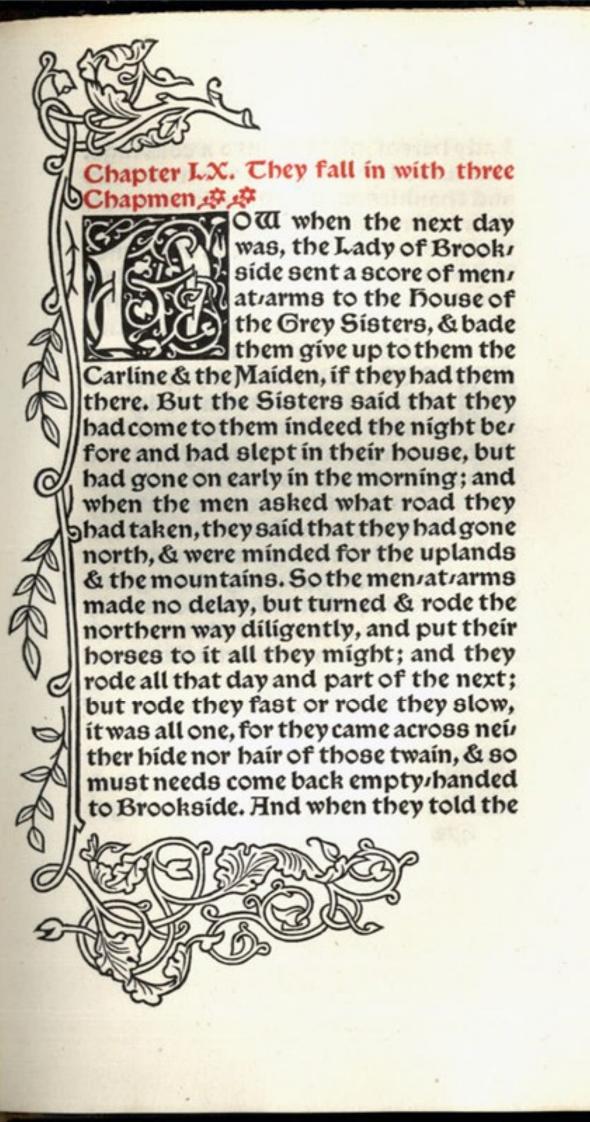
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bb2

but that up there they will slay us for Illnews

They steal away

came one man and another thronging about those runaways, and some crying out, Tell all, tell at once and blub, bering outright, bearded men though they were; & some standing stock still & staring straight before them in the extremity of their overthrow. And amidstof all this the Maiden was shoved aside and swept out of the way, till presently she felt a hand laid on her shoulder, & found it was the Carline, who spake: Come out now amidst all this hubbub ere some one think of it to shut the gates. Come speedily @ And they came outside the gate, and found none there, but two horses, and saddle/bags & a pack upon each. And the Carline said: Mount now, and we will go as thy dead friend bade us; for none may stay us now, & these horses areour very own. Now will we ride away, toinight it may be as far as the Grey Sisters, but to morrow further.



the Grev Sisters

They leave Lady hereof, she fell into a cold rage, and cursed those twain for their folly and thanklessness, and said that now they had missed all the good that she had in her heart to do them, since they had been such close friends to her dear son, late murdered. But however that might be, the Carline and the Maiden never saw Brookside again.

OOTh to say, it was by no means north that those twain rode, but as near south as might be. The Sisters were good to them, & gave them each a gown such as their layisisters wore, for they said that so arrayed they would be the less meddled with. There, withal the Prioress gave them a writing under her seal, praying all religious houses to help them wheresoever they came, whereas they were holy women & ofgoodlife. And the twain thanked them and blessed them, & made an oblation. each one of them, of a fine ruby from off that necklace of gems aforesaid.

om they rode through a peaceable country, not ill peopled, for two weeks or more, and gat

good guesting, whiles at some house They go of nuns, whiles at a good yeoman's, & south ever were folk good to them; & nought befell them to tell of, save that once they were chased by riders, but overwent them & came under the shelter of a good old knight's castle, who drave off the thieves, and gave them good guesting, but was of somewhat heavy cheer, whereas his son, who had gone to the wars, had been taken captive by the Lord of Longshaw, and was not vet come back again.

often this they came into worser lands, rocky & barren, but made their way through somehow, whereas the Carline was deft at snaring small deer, as coneys & the like, and so they lived and got forward

on their way.

agut on a day toward sunset, as they had just turned about a cor, ner of the road, they came upon a fellowship of a half-score men who were at their supper on the green grass just beforethem. Two of these gat straight to their horses and rode toward the

They meet a company

dames, who, seeing that their horses were well nigh spent, and not knowing which side to turn to, stood still and ar bode the newcomers, who were nought but courteous to them, and bade them to eat with them. The twain veasaid it perforce, & were well treated by the train vellers, who said they were merchants on the road to the peopled parts that lay beyond the mountains; and even so it seemed by their packs and bundles of goods. Albeit, ere they lay down to sleep, the Maiden whispered to the Car, line: Mother, I fearme that we be fallen amongst thieves: and this seems like thetale of the felons who first stoleme. with no kind and dear knight at hand to buy me out of servitude & Yea, my sweet, said the Carline, the hay smelleth of that weed; but fear thounot, for I will deliver thee if so it be So when themorning was, & theday was bright. those merchants drew about the Carline and the Maiden: & there were three masters there, and two of them young men not illeliking. Now the Carline speaks to the elder of the three, and

thanks him for the meat and drink and Greedveves company, & says withal that they will are cast on now be gone, as time presses them. the Maiden Says the Chapman: Nay, Carline, not so fast; how shall ye go safer than with us, ten weaponed men to wit? And safe thou shouldst go, dame, whereas thou bearest with thee so great a treasure. Said the third & youngest of the chap, men: Go with us ve needs must till we have seen thy damsel safely set in good hands: or what do ye with her? Said the Maiden: O my masters, this is my foster/mother, & to say sooth the only mother that I have known: it is with all my will that I go where she leadeth. I pray you let her do her will. And she was sore moved, and wept @ Letrarbe, child, said the Carline, caressing her; if these lords are fain to be our guides & guards, let us thank them kindly for it & go with them joyfully The chapmen looked keenly on her, but could see noughtamiss in her way of speech; so they trowed in her, & went about their matters arraying them for departure, and right joyous they seemed of the

The Maiden weeps sorely adventure. Hs for the Maiden, she yet wept; and when the Carline got to talk to her apart, as was easy amidst all the bustle, the sweetling said amidst her tears: Omy mother, I known ot how to bearit, that now after allis done I am to beathrall, and sold to someone, I know not who. And I shall be hidden away from the quest and the quest from me, so that I shall never see my love again. And even now who knows how sorely he longeth for mel Nav, my sweetling, said the Carline, hold up thine heart; no thraldom shall befall thee from these men, for I shall most surely deliver thee: but let them first bring us safe to ward the edge of the mountains, and we will take their false guesting the while for what it is worth, & trust me I shall watchthem all the while & Sothe Maid en stayed her weeping, but was shy & timid these days, and her loathing of these thieves of folk's bodies & souls made her downcast.

mo nights after, when they were resting at the day's end, the Carline, she hidden in the brake, came

quarrel

across the three men contending toge- The three therinspeech, & the words of the elder masters ending his talk she just caught: Two thousand nobles at the least would the Lord James pay down for her; he hath none like her in the house & Nor will have ever, said the second man. And for my part I will not give her up for my share of a two thousand nobles. Spake the third thereon, & he was the stoutest built & the gallantest looked of the three: Thou wilt not, thou! What savest thou to me then? The beginning and the end of it is this, that I will take her to myself alone & sell her to none. DYea, yea, said the elder, jeering, and what shall we do? Thou shalt give her to me for a price, said the youngest. Nay, but to me, said the second: everyone of thy pieces can I cover with apiece Now, said the elder, we get on swimmingly; since, forsooth, I know not where either thou or he shall get all that gold from. Wherefore now the best thing ye two may do at this present is to fall both upon me, and slay me: and after that ve two can try it out

They agree together

betwixt yourselves, & he who is left can go back to our carles, who will straight, way slay him when they have found the other two corpses. how say ye, my masters, is this a good game to play? They sat looking surlily on him, but saidnought. Then he said: Since this is comeabove ground, which to say sooth I looked for, as ye are two such brisk lads, & the woman such a pearl of beau, ty, this is my bidding: let us bring her downinto the peopled parts in peace & good fellowship, & then goall three ber fore a priest & take God's body at his hands, & pray may it choke us & rot us if we take not her straight to the Lord Tames & sell her unto him for the best penny we may, and share all alike, even as the honest and merry merchants we be. ha, what say ye now? Belike they saw that there was nothing else to be said, but as moody they were as moody might be. And to say sooth the Carline deemed that, had it not been for the serving, men that would be left over, shemight well leave them to slay them, selves. But now they went back to their

folk, and the Carline followed them in They near a little while.

Chapter LXI. They escape from the hapmen by the Carline's wizardry

he next night after, they were come to but a little way from the end of the mountains, & could see the tilled and peopled lands lying down before

them, and this had been no very long day's journey. The three merchantmasters had ridden much apart from each other all day, and there was little feasting between them at even, and all men laid them down early to sleep. The Carline had spoken a word to the Maid, en as they were arriding, so that none might hear: Sweetling, she said, the thingthouhasttodotomightistogive heed to my least word or beckoning, & obeyit, &then will all be well & So they two lay down somewhat away from the carle, folk. Amidst of the night then awoke the Maiden, and the moon was high & very bright, and looking to her

the end of the mountains

The Carline's spells

left side she saw the Carline was not there where she ought to have been; but nought scared was she thereat, since she wotted well that something would betide; but, moving as little as she might, she let her eves go round the campment, and even therewith saw the said Carline coming out of the tent of the masters, who slept all together there, whereas their serving, men lay as they might, under cloaks and such, like, beneath the naked beavens, the weather being fine and dry as at that time. Stole the Carline then, and went up to each one of the said men & made unked signs over him. & when all that was done stood up by herself amidst them all and laughed aloud. Then she called out: O sweetling, that I am preserving as a pearl of all price for the greatest warrior of the world, wakest thou or sleepest? Speak out and fear not, for these now will lie here like logs long after the moon is gone out and the sun is shining. These carles thou seest, & two of the masters lie therein in their tent; but the third, the old one,

Ilured away far into the thicket, & laid They leave him asleep there; so that his being away, and the others hunting for him, might breed delay & quarrels amongst these runagates.

that company

The Maiden lightly arose and spake in a clear voice: My mother, I am verily awake & ready for the road Soshe came to the Car, line, & they went together to the horses & dight their own, which were the best of the company's, & without more der lay gat to saddle & rode quietly down

along the pass.

O rode they till it was the afternoon, and they were come out of the mountains into the first of the meadows. Then they drew rein in a fair little ingle amidst goodly trees, and gat off their horses and tethered them amongst the sweet grass. Then spake the Carline: I must now look along the ways of sleep and see what is betiding & Therewith she drew from her hardes a goat/skin bag, which she didover berbead, and then laid berself face downwards on the grass; but the

The Carline looks behind and before

Maiden sat by her and watched.

has she lay for an hour, & tumbled and routed in her slumber, and thereafter she awoke and sat up, and was much besweated & worn; and she spake in a weak voice: I have seen what lieth behind and what lieth before; now therefore I can do, and all will be well. for the chapmen have awakened & have striven, the two young ones together, and then the two young with the old because of his bitter mocks. But now they be got to the road again, and though we be most like to prevent themata place of refuge, yet wise will it be to leave as little as may be to chance, hap. Hs to what lieth before, I have seen our way that it turneth somewhat east to/morrow, & will bring us to a goodly Abbey that hath a noble guest/house, & there, by the help of the Prior's safe, conduct and the gifts I shall give to the saints and the stewards, we shall be put well upon our way. But now will I do; and when thou seest me fall down and lie like to one dead, be not afeard, but when I come to myself again then 480

sprinkle my face with water and put a The Carcup of wine to my lips, and thereafter line's magic shall I be whole, and we shall eat and drink and go on our way.

THEN the Carline went about the way and gathered handfuls of the dust and small stones and laid them in the bag, and then lay down on the way & put the bag under herbosom&broodedit,asahenbroodi eth her eggs, moaning and muttering the while, & thus she was a long hour. Then she arose and let her hair loose, and it was long and white & not scanty. In this guise she walked to and fro athwart the road, keeping her face turn, ed toward the mountains, & kept taking handfuls of that dust & casting it up toward that quarter; and ever & anon she cried out: Be mist & mirk, and bewilderment and fear, before those faces of our foemen | Beawall behindus that they may not pierce through | Mirk behindus, light beforeus 1 @ Soshewent on till she had emptied the said bag, & then she fell aback and lay on the road as one dead. And the Maiden didasshe 481 íí

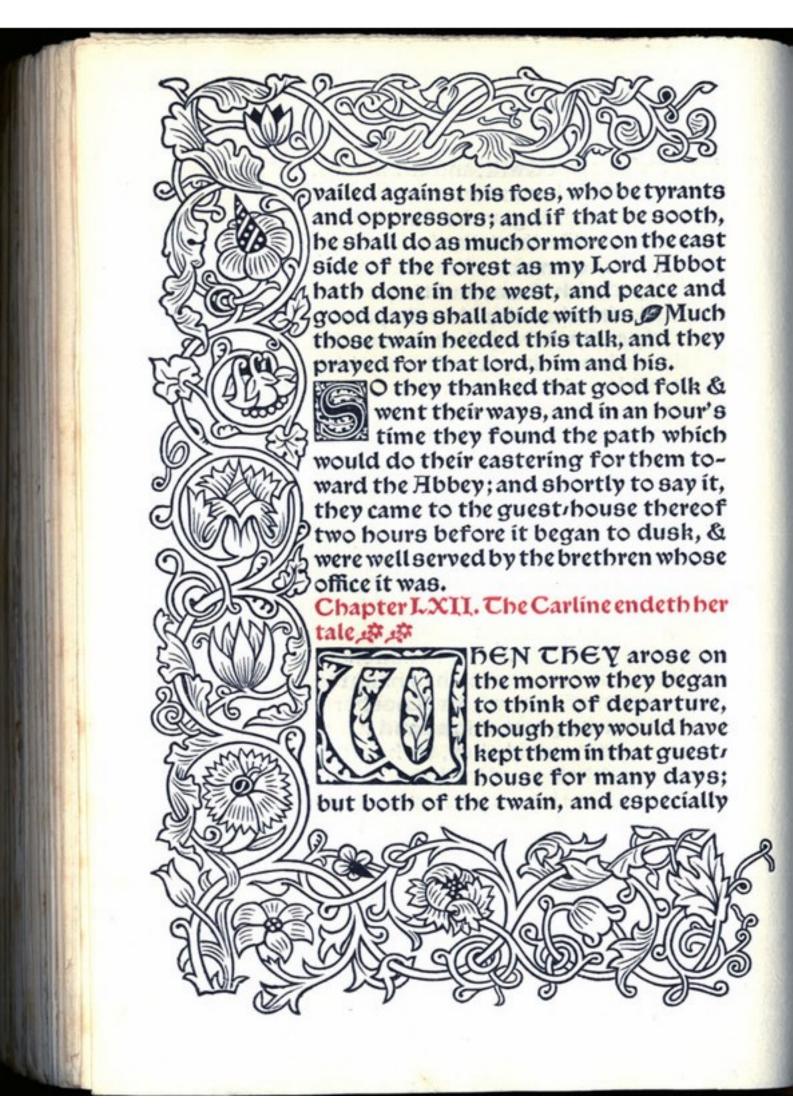
They take to the road again bad bidden and meddled not with her. But at last, and it was another hour, she began to come to herself, and the Maiden sprinkled her with water and gave her wine to drink, and the old worman arose and was herself again and of good cheer; & she stowed away her bag, and they drew forth victual & ate and drank kindly & merrily together.

othey gat to the road again when it yet lacked three hours of sunset, but rode not after night had fallen lest they should miss their way. And no shelter they had that night but the grass and the trees & the well bedecked heavens, & all that was sweet enough for them.

road early enough, & soon began to come amongst the cots
and the homesteads, and saw the folk
labouring afield, and none were otherwise than friendly to them; and a company of husbandmen, carles & queans,
hailed them from the ingle of an acre
where they were eating their dinner &
bade light down and share, and they

did so with a good will; and the upland folk looked with wonder on the Maiden and her beauty, & gave her much worship. But the Carline talked with them, andasked themmuch of their land and howitsped with them; and they said it was well with them, for that they dwelt in good peace, whereas they were under the dominion of the great Abbey, which dealt mildly with them, and would not suffer them to be harried; & they point, ed out to the newcomers a fair white castle lying on aspurof the hills which went up to the waste mountains, and did them to wit that there was the bit & the bridle of any wild men who might get it into their heads to break out on to the wealth of the holy fathers. And there be many such, said they, about our land, & especially a good way east &south bence where the land marcheth on the Great forest, which is haunted by the worst of men, who will not be refrained but by great might and great heed. And now, said they, we hear tell of that mighty & good lord, the Knight of Longshaw, that he hathof latepreii2 483

They come into the domain of the Hbbey



the Maiden, deemed that, if they might, The Carline they should be drawing nigh to that talks with dwelling of the good Knight who had the Steward overthrown the League of the Barons: & they both deemed that thereabout. if anywhere, they should have tidings. even had they long to wait for them. of that new champion whom the wise

Knight had gotten.

om then the Carline did wisely, and she got to see the Steward, and fell to talk with him, and did him to wit that, for all the simplicity of their raiment, they had both the will & the might to make a fair oblation to the Saint; & she took from the afore, said necklace two sapphires and two emeralds, all great and very fair, & the Steward's eyes danced in the head of him at the sight, and he said: This is a fair gift indeed, & if ye will come with me into the church I will show you to the Subsprior, & if ye have any honest desire, as is like, since ve have such love of holy Church, he & I between us will help you therein; and if not, nought is your time wasted in seeing our church,

They go into the church

which is of itself worth a long journey to behold.

they went, well pleased, and when they were in the church they found that he had said nought but the sooth: so many pillars there were reaching up and toward the sky, so nobly wide it was, and as long as it should be. And there were many altars therein, all as well furnished as might be done; and long hadit taken any lettered man to have told up the number of histories on the walls & in the windows, wherein they were all as if done with gemistones; and everywhere the fair stories told as if they were verily alive, and as if they who did them had seen them going on in the earth and in the heavens. So the two waited there ravished while the Steward went to fetch the Subsprior, and brought him presently, a kind & holy man, and hum, ble of demeanour. he spake to them & said: My daughters, it is told me that ye need somewhat of our house in all honesty & holiness; nowwhen ye have laidyour gift on the altar, if ye will come

with me and our Steward here to the parlour. I will hearken to all ye have to say, & if the thing ye need of us can be done, done it shall be They thanked him humbly, and went and made their oblation, & prayed, and the Subsprior blessed them, & brought them out of the church into the parlour, and there

they sat down together.

BENthe Carline opened her budget, & told how they two had suf, fered from war and rapine, & when they had been delivered from a foulcaitiff by a good Knight who had cherished them with all honour in his house, & allwent well awhile, it endured not long, for needs must be go to the wars, and there was he slain: how they, to escape the malice of the mother of the said Knight, who was a proud & hard woman, and now that her son was dead neither lovednor feared aught, must needs flee away. But withal, said the Carline, even had that good and kind Knight lived & come back to us, needs must we have left his house & his kindness ere long. forthis I must do you to wit, says she,

The Carline tells the Subsprior of their

The Abbey is friendly with the Lord of Longshaw

that we deem we have a weird and a for, tune abiding us, and that through all trouble we shall be brought thereto in the end, & that the said Knight's house of Brookside was over far from it. This therefore we ask of you, since ye have shown such kindness unto us as the man of Samaria to him who fell amongst thieves & The Subsprior smiled at her word & said: Well, dame, neither the priest nor the Levite pass by the poor souls @ father, she said, thou & thy house, are ye foes or friends to the Knight of Longshaw? F The Subsprior smiled: friends forsooth, said he, so far as we may do him any good; but ye wot that we give him no carnal help with sword and spear, yea & little indeed might we give were we temporallords, sofaroffaswe be from Longshaw, and the river & the Wood Masterless lying all between us. And now indeed we begin to deem that the good Knightmay yet come to his above, though ere he had given the Barons' League that great overthrow things seemed going much awry with him.

Moreover we have heard of a new cham, Now the pion whom he hath gotten, and who Maiden counted for much in that battle with speaks the Barons, & well nigh as wise in war is beasthe Knight himself, saymen. But now, my daughters, what would ye with the Lord of Longshaw? @ With that the Maiden took up the word, blushing red like a rose, and she said: With the Lord of Longshaw it is perhaps little that we have to do, although we wish him all good, but it is rather with that one of whom ye have beard tell that he is a new/come champion of the lord's The Subsprior smiled with al and said: But what have ye to do with this champion? The Maiden blushed no long, er, but said: I will tell you the story in as short a way as it may be told: I was a damsel living much all alone by the side of a terrible river, not lightly to be crossed.orindeednotatall. And on the other side of the said river was there a bold lad of about my years, and we fell into converse, speaking together very sweetly each from our own side of the water. And for along time this seemed

her love

She tells of a no such evil fate for the two of us to endure; but time went on, and I grew into a woman and he grew into a man, and indeed as bold a champion as there is in our parts; & then indeed it seemed hard that, though we should meet in speech, yet never should mouth meet mouth or hand meet hand. But we lived on in hope, & trusted to what weird had wrought for us. And it seemed possibly not so unlike but that this bold & eager champion might go wide in the world, & somehow find out the country and the side of the river on which I was born & bred. And in themeantime was I determined above all things never to think of anyone else but this bold and beautiful champion, and even so it is withmenow. And this good dame here, who is my very foster/mother, and is somewhat wise, though I would hope not more so than holy Church alloweth, has always bidden me to hope to see my champion again, and even so I do. And we both know that it is only amongst the Lord of Longshaw and hismen that he is to be found Quoth

the Subsprior: And when he is found, & ye let him know where ye are, will he come to you, think ye? Even so we believe, said the Maiden @ Well, said the Subsprior, tell me what ye would have, and it shall be done for you. Said the Carline: The would come across the water and have guide and guards through Wood Masterless to some place where we may dwell alone. Can ye do this much for us? And we shall be well willing to pay with suchlike gems as ye have already seen of ours for such a small house @ Well, said the Subsprior, that may well be, & to/morrow morn I will send you down to the ferry that lieth betwixt us and a house of friars on the further side of the water. At a writing from us these good brothers may find you some such dwelling in the Wood Masterless as ve seek, and will furnish you with waybeasts and guides thereto. But I leave it to you, Carline, whether ye do not risk greatly to take such a pearl with you into the place which is peopled by the worst of men Said the Carline:

Chey would come to Longshaw They cross the Great Water To tell you the truth, father, I have pieces of wisdom by which I can blind the eyes of foolish men, so that they will see nothing of the delicate beauty of my daughter here. Mell, said the

Subsprior, and smiled.

O the very next morning it was as the Subsprior said. Two lay-brothers brought them down to the water/side, and at parting gave a writing into the hand of the Carline. And when they were safely over the mighty flood, & landed on a pleasant strand where the water was shallow & the current none so swift, the ferry man spokeaword of them to one of the bro, therhood who had stood watching the crossing of that boat. With a friendly greeting he turned and led the way to the friary, a fair stone building, set with a wall both high and long. Here met the Carline and the Maiden with a kindly welcome. & were set in the guest/house to rest that night. And, said the good brothers, their matter might be seen to, & they would send them on through the Wood Masterless; and that there

was such a house as the Carline would They dwell have, which is in good case, said they, in the wood though it may want here & there a nail or a plank.

ND in the morning two of the brothers were bidden array themselves & take sumpterhorses & good horses for the women. and to lead them to within such distance of the Castle of Longshaw as might seem good to the Carline, & that for sooth was but some dozen miles.

BERE then they rested; & from time to time the Carline would go her errands, & would see folk who would give her tidings of how things went in the world. And ever she found that the tale was the same. for the Lord of Longshaw might not stretch out a band without thriving; and ever with him at council, or at privy talk, or in the front of the battle, was this marvellous champion, whom it availed nought for any man to gain say. At last the time began to seem long for the Maiden: & the Carline from time to time, when she did not know that she was nigh, heard

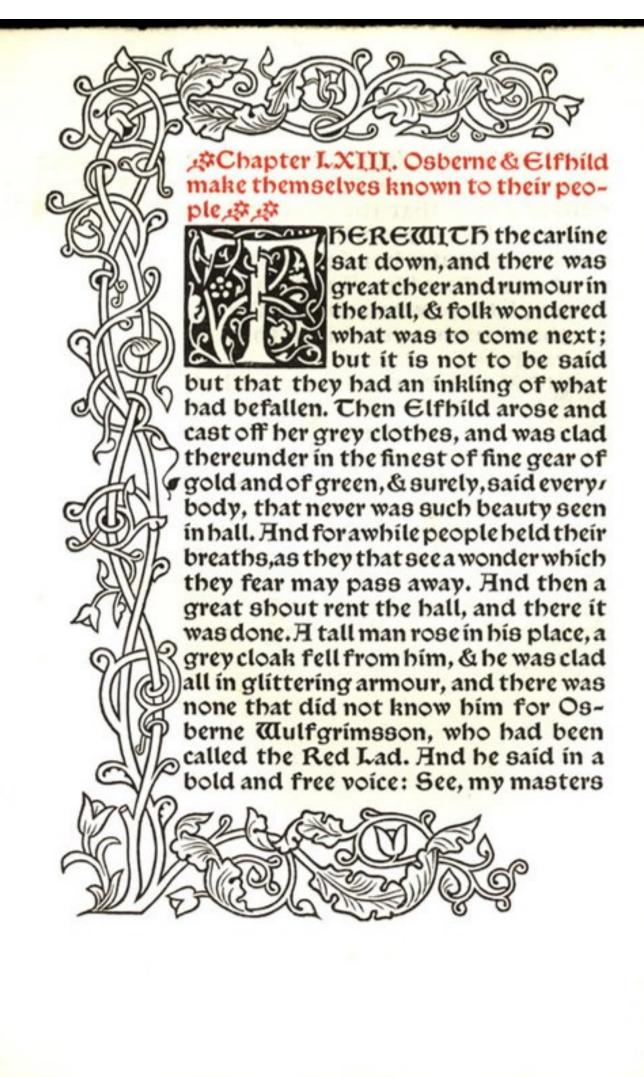
The Maiden pines for her love

her bewailing that her man came not, & she heard her say one day: If he come not before long, then will be perished some deal of that delicate beauty which I would above all things deliver into his keeping, so that he may know that it was no mere shadow of a woman with whom he gave and took in talk on the other side of the Sundering flood. #Hndin very sooth she began to peak & pine, & the Carline took her to task therefor, & said that she herself would try to set this right. Till on a day the Carline knew for sure that the champion had now turned his head from all his valiancies, and was thinking of nothingbutofhowhemightcomeacross her with whom he had such merry days on the other side of the Great Water.

The Carline knew of a certainty that he had been smitten in felony and grievously burt, & that he had been carried to an hermitage and there healed; therefore she waylaid him on a time and brought him to the house wherein they dwelt. And there, whether

er it were by her planning or by mere The Carline chance/hap may scarce be told, but such ends her a thing befell that the wrath of the tale champion blazed out in him, so that for some few minutes he might scarce tell what was before him. And then it was allover, & they two were sealed for one another for what yet abided them on the earth.

om this is my tale, and belike it has been somewhat overslong, & therefore it scarce needs that ye bid this damsel tell a tale for her part, which were indeed better told by her casting to earth her grey cloak & show, ing her body fairly dight. for, indeed, this damsel belongeth to one who is your kinsman & dear friend, & seemly willshethinkitthatsheshowherbody so dight that it shall lack no fairness before you.

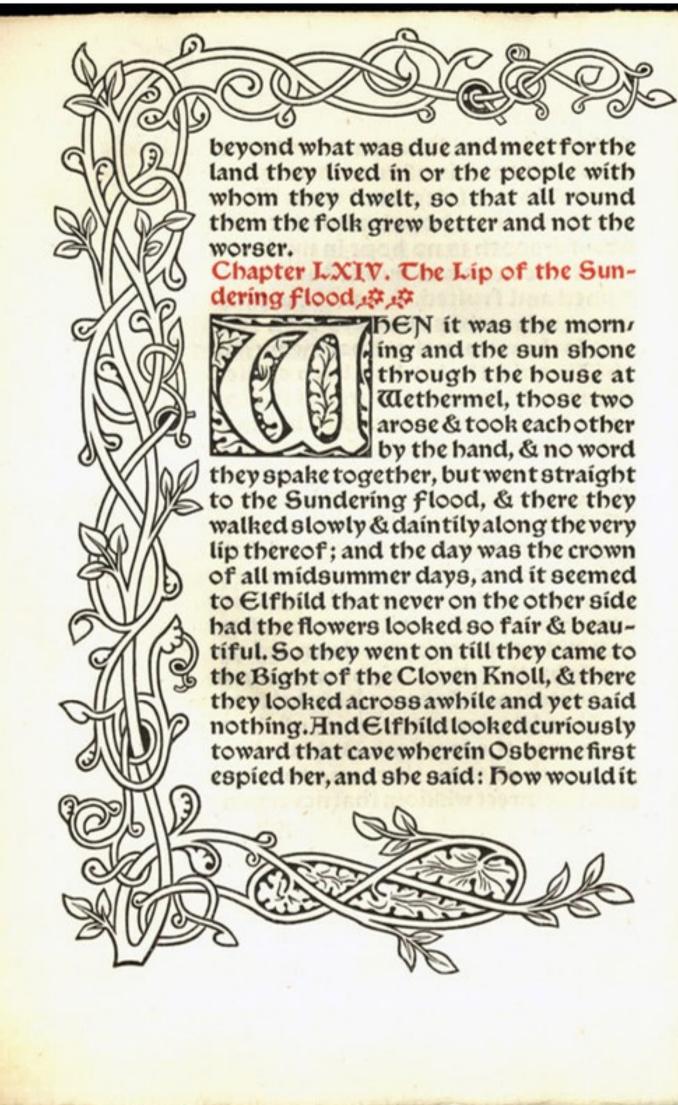


ends the tale

& dear friends, if I have not kept tryst Osberne with you; for it is of a sooth five years well told since I departed from Weth, ermel with little hope in my heart. And now forsooth is no hope in my heart, for all the hope has budded and blossomed and fruited, & I am yours and ve are mine while the days last. Hnd this is the woman that I have won; and oh! I would that it had been earlier, though God wot I laboured at it. And now I think ye will be good to her as ye will be good to me, and what tale shall there be except of peace and quiet in these farraway upland vales?

opposed the hours into deep night at Wethermel, and folk went to sleep scarce trowing in the wonders that they had heard and seen. And there were few among them that did not long for the dawn and the daylight, that they might once again cast eyes upon Osberne & his beloved. Andhardit were to say which of those twain was the loveliest. But surely about both of them there was then and always a sweet wisdom that never went

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the pipe

be if there were another one there? # Elfhild he laughed and said: There is not ano- plays on therone Butshe said: Dost thouremember that game I played with the shepherd's pipe, how that the sheep cameallbundling towards me? Dear ly I remember it, said Osberne Now, she said, I will tell thee a thing. I have got the said pipe in my bosom now. It were good game to have it forth and try whether it has lost its power. The said: Well, try it @ She said: Be there sheep about? #Hnd there were sheep at no great distance.

ND she drew forth the pipe and set her lips to it and played, and there came from it that very same sweet old tune that had joyed him so much long aforetime. But when they looked to see what would happen to the sheep, lo and behold they stirred not at all for all the sweetness of the tune, nor made as if they heard it. So they laughed, albeit each of them, and Elfhild in especial, was a little grieved that the power had departed from the pipe. And they looked down towards

Osberne casts it in the water

the water, and Elfhild half thought to see a little brown man sitting at the door of the cave. But there was nothing; only it seemed to them both that there came up from the water a sound that said, Give it me back again. And Osbernesaid: Didstthou hear that? Wea, shesaid, I thought I heard something. What shall we do? @ Said he: Why should be have his pipe back again? She said: Let us see what will happen if we cast it down to him & Good, said Osberne, Hnd he took the pipe, & as deftly as he might he cast it towards the mouth of the cave, but it fell a long way short. But lo, as it was on the very point of striking the water it seemed that it was wafted up to the cave's mouth, & it vanished away into the cave no slower than might have been looked for. And a faint voice came up from the water & said: I am pleased; good luck go with you.

O they sat down and pondered on these things a while, till at last Elfo hild said: Now will I tell thee a tale as in old days & And he said: That is

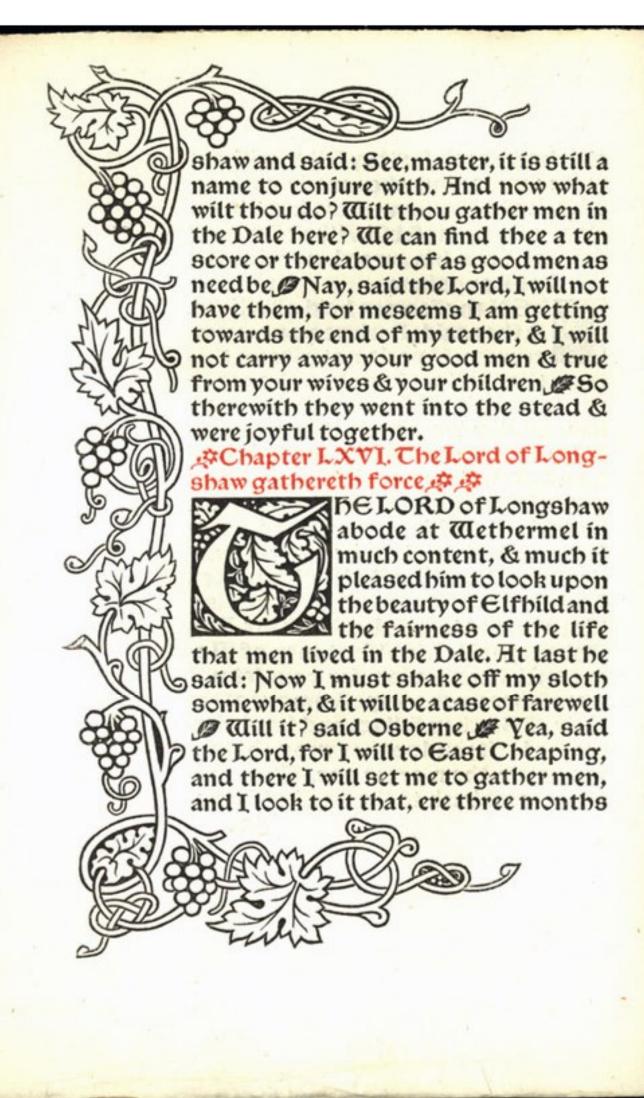
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good @ Then she began a tale which The Lord of was sweet and pleasant, & littlelike to Longshaw those terrible things that had happened comes into the Dale to those two since they were sundered by the flood. And it lasted long, and the afternoon was hot, and they were fain for coolness' sake to creep into the shadow of certain bushes that grew a little off the lip of the Sundering flood. There they rested them, and when the shadows began to lengthen they arose & went back hand in hand to Wethermel as they had come. Chapter LXV. H friend at need A T was some three years after this that weaponed men came down into the Dale. It was told to Osberne, & he took his sword & went to meet them. he came across them as they fared slowly down the bent, looking weary and fordone. helookedat them, & he saw that there was nothing for it but that the chiefest of them, and there were but three, was the Lord of Longshaw. So he ran up to him, & cast his arms about

Osberne speaks with his pursuers him & kissed him, and asked him what ailed. And the Lord said, and laughed withal: That has befallen me which ber falls most men: I have been overcome, and I believe that my foes are hard on my heels Mill they be a many? said Osberne Not in this first stour, said the Lord Will, said Osberne, I will go and look to it to get a few men together to show them out of the Dale Sobeturned band in band with the Lord of Longshaw, & cried out to Stephen the Eater to gather forth; and in an hour or so they had enough men and to spare. By that time the pursuers came glittering over the bent, so Osberne & his gathered themselves togetherand stood till the others came. And when they were within bail, Osberne asked: What would ye here in arms? We are peaceable men Said the pursuers: The have nought to do with you, but we would have the body of a felonand a traitor hight the Lord of Longshaw. Osberne laughed and said: here he stands beside me; come and take him! #Hnd the foe were some three score, allashorseback. So they fell on without The Red more words; but they made nothing of it, & the Wethermellers kept them aloof with spear & bill. Albeit Osberne did not draw his sword, nor did the Lord of Longshaw.

Lad draws Boardcleaver

BEN the foemen held offa little. & they said: hark ye, ye up count trymen, if ye do not give up this man, then will we burn your house to the threshold Wea, said Osberne, ye have all day long to do it in, make no delay therefore. Or did ye ever hear who Iam? @ Hnd they said: Nay, we know not & Then he let his red cloak float over him & let his byrny show glittering, and he drew Board/cleaver & suddenly criedout, The Red Lad The Red Lad! and all the others did in like wise. Then the foemen fled up the bent. And Osberne said: Lightfoot men of Methermel, here is a job for you: let not one of these menescape from out of the Dale @ So they fell to, and hard they workedatit; and so they wrought that they slew them every one. Then Osberne went back to the Lord of Long-



are over, I shall have a good host on foot, It is well, said Osberne.

n Osberne would go t, along with d him

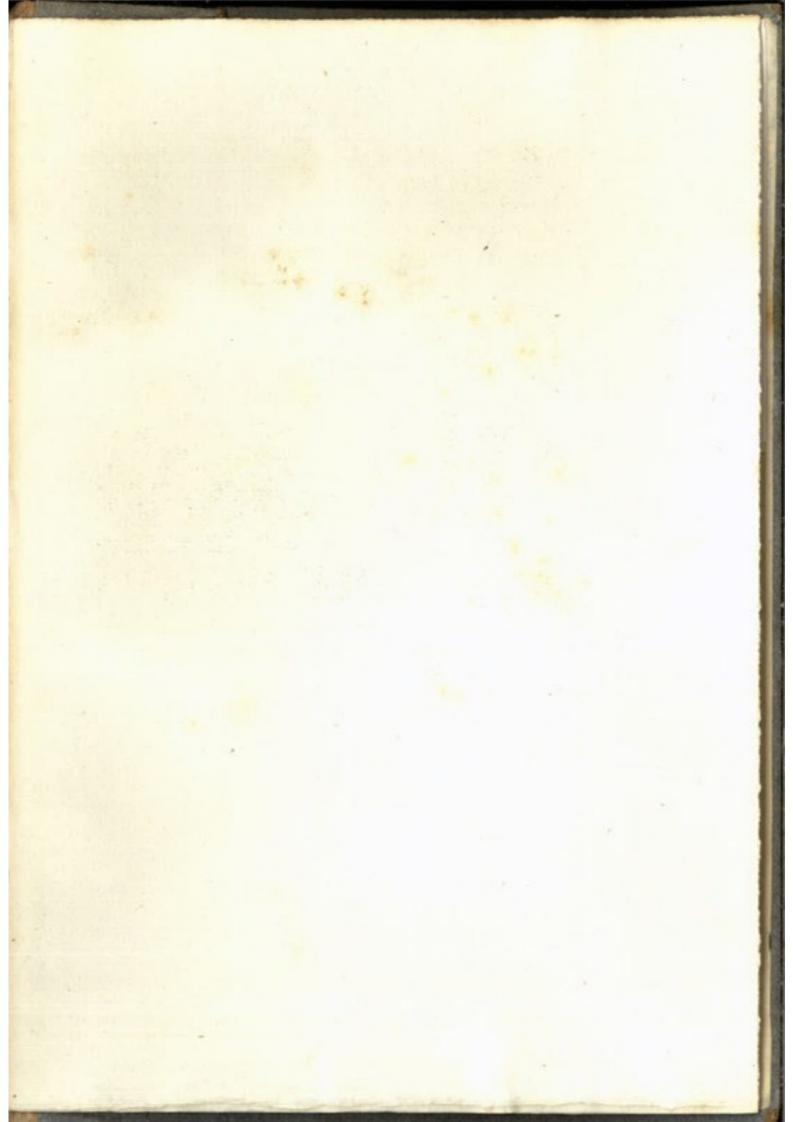
Oin two days' time the Lord went, with his two men that had fled into the Dale with him, to East Cheaping, and Osbernerode with him. When they came to East Cheaping the Lordsaid: Nowis the time for farewell. Nay, nay, said Osberne, there shall be no farewell this time at least; but I will help thee with the gathering of men, & when we have got an host I will be the leader thereof. This thou must not gainsay me Said the Lord: But gainsay thee I will, for unless thou get, test thee back to thine own people I will break up my whole purpose #Hnd why? said Osberne @ Thou art blind not to see, said the Lord. I come and find thee here as happy as any man in the world, wedded to a fair wife, the lord of a stout & stalwart people who love theeabove all things. And I have that in me that tellsmethatif I carry thee away I carry theeaway to death. for I have seen thee in a dream of the night & in a dream of the day living at Wethermel and dying The Knight forbids him, and they take leave

on the field near the City of the Sunder, ing flood Said Osberne: And shall I choose dishonour then? Nay, he said, where is the dishonour? Besides. take this for a gibe, that whereas time agone I could do but ill without thee. now I can do without thee well, for I have three or four fellows will come to my call as soon as they know that my banneris in the field again. Wherefore, I tell thee, thou must either be my unfriend, or get thee back home my friend and my lad @So when Osberne saw it would no better be, he wept & bade farewell to the Lord of Longshaw, & went his ways back home. Six months hence he heard true tidings of the Lord, that be had gathered an host and fallen on his foes, and had fared nowhere save to thrive. And it is not said that he met the Lord of Longshaw face to face again in this life.

in every quarter Osberne went in to that same dale wherein he first met Steelhead, and there he came to him, and they had converse together;

& though Osberne changed the aspect The story of him from year to year, as for Steel- is ended head he changed notatall, but was ever the same as when Osberne first saw him, and good love there was between those twain.

cerning the Sundering flood & those that dwelt thereby.



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